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Host Community Narratives of Volunteer Tourism in Ghana:
From Developmentalism to Social Justice

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THESIS
Submitted to the Faculty of Social Work
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
Master of Social Work
Wilfrid Laurier University

Human rights arguments are most powerful if we really believe that all humans are equally valuable. When we do believe this, we are less likely to accept second-rate interventions and more likely instead to remediate the inequalities that are each day brought more clearly into view by a globalizing economy.

-Paul Farmer, Pathologies of Power (2003, p. 193)

Abstract

It is evident from the research around volunteer tourism that local perspectives are sorely lacking. Instead of the focus of research being on the communities that volunteer tourism is meant to help, the emphasis remains on the experiences of the volunteers. Although many researchers identify the lack of attention directed towards host communities as a problem, there remains a lack of research in this area. The importance in the existing research, then, remains on the ‘us’ in developed countries instead of the those in developing countries that volunteer tourism is meant to help. The primary objective of this research is to advocate for the voices of members of host communities in Ghana and to emphasize their importance in developing, maintaining, and creating worthwhile volunteer tourism experiences for the community while demonstrating the importance of the social justice approach in creating lasting, systemic change.

An exploratory research project was undertaken in a small community in Ghana with a number of volunteer tourism projects chosen as the site of the research. Using the anti-colonial discursive framework, nine community members were engaged in semi-structured interviews in order to gain a better understanding of their experiences with volunteer tourism projects and volunteers. A narrative methodology was used in to put together a ‘big picture’ about the experiences of people living within host communities. Five themes were identified using conventional content analysis: volunteer tourism in the community, who is a volunteer, positive personal experiences, the integration of volunteers, and, finally, recommendations for improvements. It is my hope that this research can be a starting point to inspire others to look more closely at host community experiences when researching volunteer tourism.

Acknowledgements

I never came into the MSW program expecting to complete a thesis, so it came as a surprise to myself and everyone around me when I decided that it was, in fact, something I wanted to do. I walked into the research methods class in the second semester of my first year telling myself that research methods were boring and that I would never need them, and walked out three months later with a research proposal that I was determined to make a reality.

I would like to sincerely offer my thanks to my thesis advisor, Magnus Mfoafo-M'Carthy, whose support and kind words have been integral to the completion of this project. The support I received prior to my departure, while in Ghana, and after my return to Canada were necessary not only for the success of my thesis, but also for my own reflexive practice. I would also like to acknowledge the positive role that my thesis committee member, Bree Akesson, played throughout this process. From the articles she sent throughout the year, to the amazing, in-depth feedback I received, I appreciate the time spent guiding me and facilitating my growth as a student researcher. Finally, as my outside committee member, I sincerely thank Marcia Oliver; your critiques and help were invaluable in allowing me to gain a better understanding of the global issues behind poverty and oppression which has allowed me to strengthen my thesis ten-fold! I sincerely thank you all for your time, generosity, and support!

The support I have received from my family and friends since the beginning of this project one year ago has been inspiring. There have been many times – both here at home and in Ghana – that I felt as though this research project was just too big, too broad, and too outside of my capabilities for me to ever complete, but their belief in me was unwavering. To my mom Mary K.; my grandma Elaine S.; and my friends Ryan K., Amber F., Tessa F., Eleanor M., and Zach L., thank you for everything you've done to support me. The upset phone calls, the chat

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A quick Google search for “volunteer abroad” brings up more than 4 460 000 results in a matter of milliseconds, immediately providing options for companies and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to advertise these volunteer opportunities to the globally-minded individual. The website *volunteerabroad.com*, on which up to 85% of volunteer tourism NGOs post their opportunities (Keese, 2011), allows users to browse 152 countries for international volunteer experiences; not only can users sort by country, they are also able to search for experiences by *type* of volunteer work, *duration* of the experience, and – if they are undecided about where they wish to go – by region (‘Volunteer Abroad | GoAbroad.com’, 2015). Although statistics on the prevalence and popularity of volunteer tourism are difficult to find, the rise in number of organizations offering volunteer tourism options is evidence of the increased demand for these kinds of experiences. In 1987, there were only 100 international volunteer tourism organizations, by 2010, there were over 1300 (Wright, 2013).

Given the increase in popularity of volunteer tourism amongst travellers and volunteers, there has also been an increase in research on volunteer tourism. McGehee (2012) identifies three primary stakeholder groups in the volunteer tourism industry: the volunteer tourist, the organization, and the host community. In addition to these three stakeholders, I would offer the suggestion that there is a fourth: the state. While not benefitting directly from volunteer tourism, the state benefits indirectly; when development initiatives are taken care of by NGOs, there is less impetus for the state to offer the same initiatives or services, thus freeing up bureaucracy, capital, and time to focus on other projects. There have been a large number of studies on the volunteer tourist – motivations, actual experiences, and the personal impact of the experience (Conran, 2011; McGehee, 2012) – however there has been comparatively little research on the

host community, making it the least-studied group within volunteer tourism research (Conran, 2011; Keese, 2011; Lupoli, Morse, Bailey, & Schelhas, 2014; McGehee, 2012; Sin, 2010; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wright, 2013). As one of the primary goals of volunteer tourism is to enact positive change in the host community (Luh Sin, Oakes, & Mostafanezhad, 2015; Raymond, 2008; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001), the lack of host voices within the literature is cause for concern. By not taking into account the voices of local community members and of the host communities as a whole, volunteer tourism simply becomes another arm of neoliberal policies that further decouple “social policy and nation-state” (Conran, 2011, p. 1455), which has the potential to hinder, rather than help, host communities. Put simply, neoliberalism is “an ideological perspective that supports minimal government involvement in the marketplace, the fostering of individual freedom and responsibility and the championing of market forces as the most appropriate guiding societal principles” (Alston, 2002, p. 216). As a result of neoliberal policies, community development and social resources become privatized, and are then commodified and marketed to well-meaning individuals in the developed world (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011).

Although the need to understand the perspectives of host communities in relation to volunteer tourism has been well-documented in the literature, the research that has followed has been lacking (Conran, 2011; Keese, 2011; Lupoli et al., 2014; McGehee, 2012; Sin, 2010; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wright, 2013). Therefore, it is important that studies focusing on the voices of residents within communities where volunteer tourism takes place are conducted in order to gain a clearer image of the volunteer tourism industry as a whole, instead of focusing on the volunteers or organizations. Within this study, I hope to highlight the experiences and perspectives of residents of a small community in Ghana that hosts volunteer tourists;

additionally, I hope to contribute to the growing collection of literature about creating socially just volunteer tourism experiences.

What is Volunteer Tourism?

While the popularity of volunteer tourism is evidently on the rise, there is still no formal, established definition of the term (Conran, 2011; Guttentag, 2009; Keese, 2011; Wright, 2013).

Throughout much of the research on volunteer tourism, it seems that the most accepted definition comes from Wearing (2001):

The generic term ‘volunteer tourism’ applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment. (p. 1)

Volunteer tourism can be broadly categorized into two kinds of experiences: ecotourism – or volunteering with the focus of helping or restoring the environment, and socially-motivated volunteer tourism, which can include poverty alleviation, community building, and teaching (Guttentag, 2009; Wearing, 2001).

Although a formal definition of volunteer tourism is undecided, there seem to be a number of characteristics that all or nearly all volunteer tourist experiences seem to encompass:

- volunteer tourism ventures should “bring about positive impacts to host destinations” and “tourists [should] make a direct and tangible improvement to host-communities in host destinations” (Sin, 2010, p. 947);
- voluntary work will be coupled with travel and leisure (Barbieri, Santos, & Katsube, 2011);
- volunteers will have both discretionary time and income, as volunteer tourism experiences are often costly (McGehee & Santos, 2005);

- and, ultimately, the hope that volunteers are “motivated by a sense of altruism and wishing to make a difference in the world” (Keese, 2011, p. 257).

For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on socially-motivated volunteer tourism. While ecotourism and socially-motivated volunteer tourism may both fall under the umbrella of volunteer tourism, it was important to narrow down the focus of the research in order to have a concentrated research topic.

Interest and Motivations

Completing the research for my Master’s degree in Ghana was not something I envisioned for myself while growing up near Midland, Ontario. Midland – with a population of 16 572 (Government of Canada, 2012) and approximately 600 visible minorities (Government of Canada, 2013) – is small, quaint, and not at all ethnically or racially diverse. Until I attended the University of Toronto in Scarborough to begin my undergraduate degree, I had never been surrounded by any significant ethnic or racial diversity, and I had never given much thought to the world outside of North America and Europe.

I have three younger siblings, all of whom are my half-brothers; a collection of ex-stepparents; and have moved nearly as many times as I am years old (that is, 27). Growing up I was surrounded by loving family members who were supportive of me in anything I chose to pursue, but to say it was a wholly stable childhood would be misleading. Individually and together as a family we have faced challenges – poverty, divorce, addiction, and mental illness, among others – but we have always remained a source of strength for one another in difficult times. In light of this, I was raised understanding the value of family, the importance of support and the responsibility of helping those in need.

I come from a family of social workers: my grandmother completed her Bachelor of Social Work in 1992, while my mother completed hers more recently, in 2011. Although my undergraduate degree was in philosophy, I knew from my second year that ultimately, I wanted to pursue social work and continue on what seems to be a family tradition – what I jokingly call the “Social Work Dynasty”. Unlike my mother and grandmother, however, I have always known that I have not wanted to work as a clinical social worker. My interest has always rested on mezzo and macro social work; my desire has been to work to alleviate large-scale, structural barriers instead of working directly with individuals.

Instead of applying to Master of Social Work programs immediately upon finishing my Bachelor of Arts, I decided to move to Japan to teach English in a rural, public high school. I quickly fell in love with East Asia and continued teaching for three years, practicing Japanese after school and travelling to neighbouring countries in between semesters. It was on one of those trips where I experienced being in a developing country for the first time.

My time in Thailand and Cambodia inspired me to look into this new type of tourism that I had recently heard about from a friend, where I would be able to offer my time and services to volunteer in a developing country. The more I researched, however, the more I realized that although volunteer tourism may have the veneers of social justice and creating positive change, the efficacy of many of the programs was highly contested. I ultimately decided that volunteer tourism was not for me, and the idea was relegated to the back of my mind.

I did not think of volunteer tourism again until I began applying to complete an international practicum placement for my Master of Social Work. At this point in time, I was insistent that international social work was where I belonged and where I would find my future career, but then questions arose. What made completing an international placement different than

volunteer tourism? *Was* it different? After more research and a lot of introspection, I decided that yes, they *were* different; my goal in completing an international practicum was not to offer my time and services to the “poor people” in a developing country, it was to *learn* – about how social work can be practiced in an entirely different environment, about skills that I may not have thought about before, and about myself and who I am. Volunteer tourism, though, was once again on my mind.

I remember the first time I researched volunteer organizations that did trips internationally, there was very little information available about the effects that these programs have on local members of the community but significant amounts of information about how great they are for the volunteers. With a year of social work classes under my belt, a critical eye, and access to a library full of journal articles, I once again tackled the literature on volunteer tourism. This time, however, I knew I was going to Ghana and I knew that I could have the opportunity to work toward filling the gap that I had identified years before.

A Note on the Terminology

The ways in which countries are economically classified is a contentious issue, as most categorizations imply an inherent judgement or lack of equality. In an article about the use of the term “developing world”, Tariq Khokhar and Umar Serajuddin of The World Bank blog *The Data Blog* argued that “while classification schemes are convenient for analysis and communication, every one comes with a set of limitations, biases and cultural overtones” (2015). It is important, then, to discuss the biases and implications of using classification terms in research such as this.

<i>Classification Terms</i>	<i>Use and Origins</i>	<i>Problems and Biases</i>
<i>First World - Third World</i>	From the Cold War era; “origins in the idea of a ‘third force’ or ‘third way’ in world affairs (distinct from American capitalism or Soviet socialism)” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 309)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implies a hierarchy where the First World is superior (Silver, 2015) • The Soviet Union no longer exists • “How can an affluent country like Saudi Arabia, neither Western nor communist, be part of the Third World?” (Silver, 2015)
<i>Global North - Global South</i>	In vogue from the 1960s to the 1980s, when the image of the world was split between the wealthy countries in the Northern hemisphere and the poor developing countries in the Southern hemisphere (Therien, 1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Graduation” of countries such as South Korea and Turkey from South to North (Therien, 1999) • Difference in development between countries in the Global South; eg. “the widening gulf between the high-performance economies of East Asia and the stagnant economies of sub-Saharan Africa” (Therien, 1999, p. 726) • Australia and New Zealand, both highly developed countries, are in the Global South
<i>Developed - Developing</i>	Used by the United Nations to group economically similar countries (‘Standard Country and Area Codes Classifications (M49)’, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes a hierarchy between countries • Huge variation within the “developing country” category • Imprecise language
<i>High - Middle - Low income</i>	Used by the World Health Organization (WHO). “WHO Member States are grouped into 4 income groups (low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high) based on the World Bank list of analytical income classification of economies” (‘WHO Definition of region groupings’, n.d.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “not every country does a good job of estimating GDP” (Neil Fantom in Silver, 2015), meaning that categorization may be inaccurate
<i>Majority – Minority World</i>	Used in preference to terms like “developing” or “third world” countries in order to highlight the fact that they contain most of the world’s population; these terms also highlight the role that the minority world has in making decisions that affect a majority of the world’s peoples (Emmanuel, 2009).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very broad category with significant variation between the majority world countries • Unable to discuss similarities between countries using the term “majority world” as there is so much variance in the countries that make up this category

Table 1: Country Classification Terms

The “developing world” has long been used in both colloquial and academic situations to describe countries of similarly poor economic standing, although there is no exact definition to be found (Gates, 2014; Khokhar & Serajuddin, 2015; Silver, 2015). As Silver (2015) states, “on the surface, it seems accurate. We're writing about countries that need to develop better health care systems, better schools, better ways to bring water and electricity to people”. The usefulness and the accuracy of the term “developing world” have recently, however, been questioned:

- From Bill Gates in the Gates Foundation Annual Letter 2014:

Some so-called developing countries have come so far that it's fair to say they have developed. A handful of failed states are hardly developing at all. Most countries are somewhere in the middle.
- The variation between countries labeled as “developing” is huge. Although the Gross National Income (GNI) of Mexico is more similar to the world's average GNI, it is classified within the same group as Malawi (see Figure 1). Similarly, Khokhar and Serajuddin (2015) call attention to the extreme poverty rates in both Mexico and Malawi; while Malawi's rate of extreme poverty is 70.91%, that of Mexico is much smaller at 2.68%.
- Some of the previous distinctions between the “developed” and the “developing” world either no longer exist or have greatly decreased over time. Khokhar and Serajuddin (2015) point to infant mortality as an example of this: “In 1960 there were two broad groups of countries in the world - those with low levels of fertility and infant mortality (“developed”), and those with high fertility rates and infant mortality (“developing”)”. When compared with data from 2013, however, there has been a dramatic shift. They argue that “it's still possible to distinguish a few countries, but in most of the world, we see both low infant mortality and fertility rates” (Khokhar & Serajuddin, 2015)

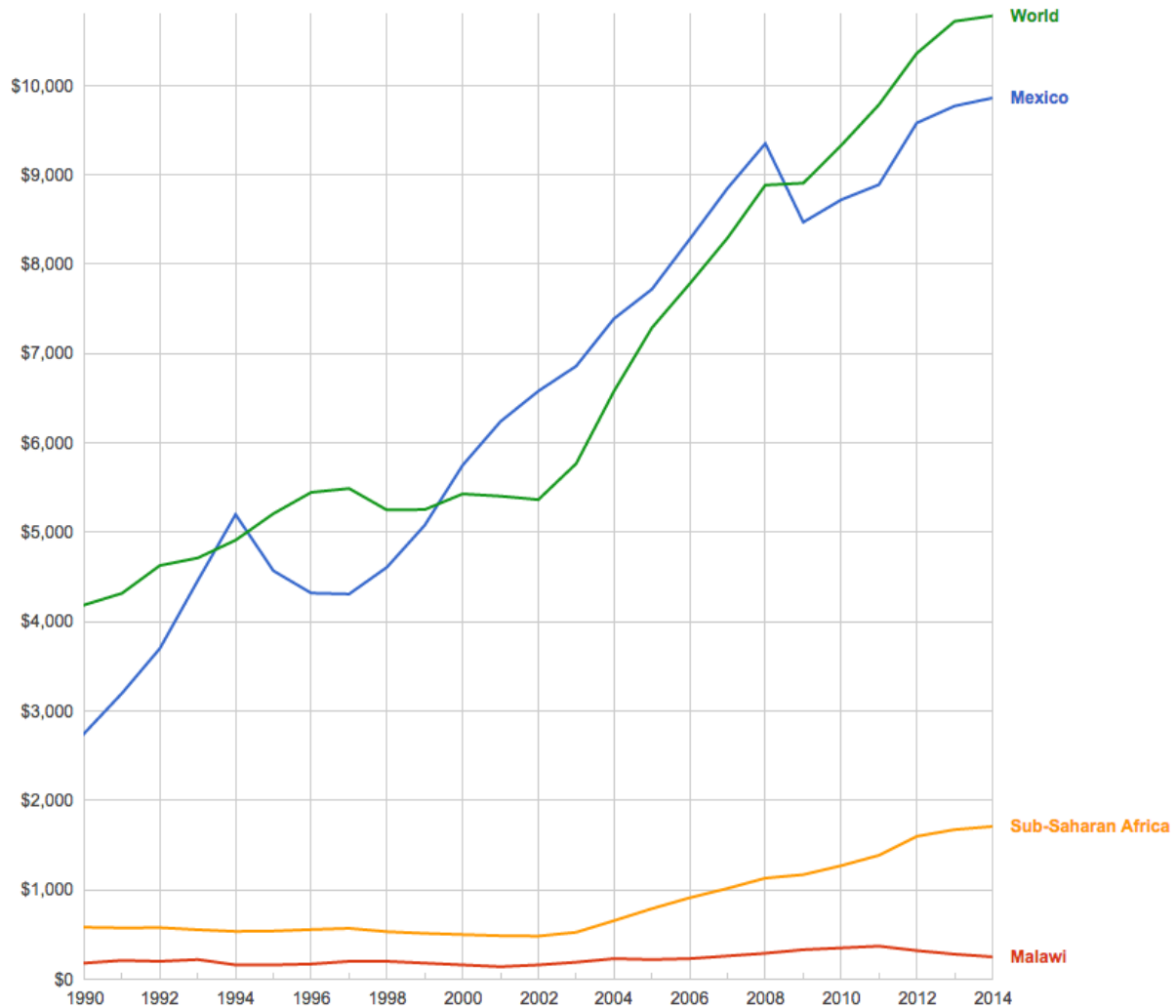


Figure 1: Gross National Income (GNI) of the world, Mexico, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Malawi per capita in US dollars
Adapted from “Should we continue to use the term ‘developing world’,” by T. Khokhar and U. Serajuddin, 2015, *The Data Blog*, Copyright 2015 by The World Bank. Reprinted with permission.

- Within the article “If You Shouldn't Call it The Third World, what Should You Call it?”

(2015) written on the *Goats and Soda* blog on National Public Radio's (NPR) website, a

social psychologist from the University of Cape Town, Shose Kessi explains her dislike of the term “developing world”:

it assumes a hierarchy between countries. It paints a picture of Western societies as ideal but there are many social problems in these societies as well. It also perpetuates stereotypes about people who come from the so-called developing world as backward, lazy, ignorant, irresponsible.

Although recognizing the inherent biases in grouping countries as either “developed” or “developing”, these are the terms that will be used throughout the paper for two primary reasons. First, while there are more accurate terms that can be used to describe these countries, such as “high, middle, or low income” countries, this more specific characterization is not present in the volunteer tourism industry. The more acceptable terms “majority/minority world” will also not be used, as this is not the terminology that is present throughout the volunteer tourism industry. Take, for example, the Missions Statement of Projects Abroad, a Canadian volunteer tourism organization: “our mission is to encourage young people to volunteer for worthwhile work in developing countries” (Projects Abroad Inc., n.d.). It is important, then, to be consistent in the language used within the volunteer tourism industry and the literature about volunteer tourism.

Secondly, countries that are host to volunteer tourism opportunities span income categories. Using Projects Abroad as an example, they offer volunteer tourism experiences in 31 countries around the world (Projects Abroad Inc., n.d.). Below is a list of their country offerings organized by income level (The World Bank, 2016), in order to gain an understanding of the broad range of income categories covered in the volunteer tourism industry.

<i>High-Income</i>	<i>Upper-Middle-Income</i>		<i>Lower-Middle-Income</i>		<i>Low-Income</i>
Argentina	Belize	Mexico	Bolivia	Morocco	Cambodia
	China	Mongolia	Bangladesh	Philippines	Ethiopia
	Costa Rica	Peru	Ghana	Samoa	Madagascar
	Ecuador	Romania	India	Senegal	Nepal
	Fiji	South Africa	Kenya	Sri Lanka	Tanzania
	Jamaica	Thailand	Laos	Vietnam	Togo

Table 2: Projects Abroad volunteer destinations by World Bank income category

Because the destinations that potential volunteers can choose span all four World Bank income categories, it is difficult to use specific terminology when discussing volunteer tourism. In order to remain consistent with the terminology used by volunteer tourism organizations and because

of the broad range of economies present in volunteer tourism destinations, I will use “developing” and “developed” countries throughout this research project. Even still, it is important to note that I am using them cautiously, without judgement for development status of any country.

Content Outline

With the objective of this research being to gain an understanding of the experiences of members of a host community with volunteer tourism, I begin in Chapter 2 with a review of the relevant literature on the topic – including the gaps that this project aims to address. What follows in Chapter 3 is a description of the methodological approach of this study, which includes information such as the purpose of the study, my theoretical underpinnings, the research design, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Next I will share the results from the research, which includes several primary themes. In the final chapters of this thesis will offer a discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to situate this research project, the literature review will explore the relevant research pertaining to volunteer tourism. It will first begin by outlining the state of volunteer tourism today, followed by a brief characterization of the average volunteer tourist. Next the review will highlight some of the common criticisms directed towards the volunteer tourism industry. Finally, as a way to contextualize the gaps which this research intends to fill, the literature review will critique two significant frameworks for ethical volunteer tourism while describing the importance of social justice in the volunteer tourism industry, and underscore the lack of research involving input from people living in host communities that host volunteer tourism projects.

Volunteer Tourism Today

As of 2008, organizations, whether they be international or local NGOs or tourism agencies, sent over 1.6 million volunteer tourists annually to developing countries around the world (Tourism Research and Marketing, 2008). These volunteer tourists spend a short amount of time, often less than four weeks – but sometimes longer (Callanan & Thomas, 2005), in a developing country offering their services to development projects in the environmental, education, childcare, or healthcare sectors (Wright, 2013). When comparing the geography of volunteer tourism, Africa has more organizations offering more volunteer opportunities than any other region (Hartman, Paris, & Blache-Cohen, 2014; Keese, 2011), with Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and Uganda being the most popular countries for these experiences (Hartman et al., 2014; Keese, 2011). According to Keese (2011), the primary draws for Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and Uganda are the wildlife and wilderness, while Ghana is “marketed as peaceful, democratic, English speaking and exemplifying typical African village life” (p. 265).

Volunteer tourism is often praised as being mutually beneficial for tourists and host communities alike, as the volunteer experience has been said to enable tourists to engage more authentically with communities and provides those same communities with sustainable development (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Wright, 2013). Volunteer sending agencies (VSAs), defined as any “organisation which develops and organizes a volunteer tourism program and can range from a locally based non-profit organisation, to a multinational commercially run organisation” (Raymond, 2008), operate simultaneously as arms of the tourism industry (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011) but also as development and aid organizations (Everingham, 2015; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). VSAs range from NGOs to commercial for-profit organizations to non-profits, and are frequently based in developed countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011), making the motivations of VSAs vary wildly from organization to organization.

The three key stakeholders in the volunteer tourism industry being the VSA, the volunteer, and the host communities as identified by McGehee (2012), however, have achieved unequal recognition in the literature (Conran, 2011; Keese, 2011; Luh Sin et al., 2015; Lupoli et al., 2014; McGehee, 2012; Sin, 2010; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wright, 2013). In a critical examination of volunteer tourism literature, Luh Sin et al. (2015) identified four key areas covered by research:

1. Pre-trip motivations of volunteer tourists and how these are considered to differ from mainstream tourists.
2. Whether volunteer tourism is motivated by self-interest or altruism.
3. Impacts and outcomes of volunteer tourism at host destinations with a significant strand of works identifying issues of power and unequal socio-economic statuses between hosts and volunteer tourists.
4. Impacts and outcomes of volunteer tourism on volunteer tourists (p. 120-121).

Despite the growth in literature over the past number of years, the voice of host community members remains notably absent (Conran, 2011; Keese, 2011; Luh Sin et al., 2015; Lupoli et al., 2014; McGehee, 2012; Sin, 2010; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wright, 2013).

Indicators for Program Evaluation

Due to the ever-increasing commodification of volunteer tourism, evaluations of volunteer tourism programs available to the public often focus on satisfying the potential volunteer tourist instead of articulating the benefits to the host community (Higgins-Desbiolles & Russell-Mundine, 2008; Lupoli et al., 2014). In order to gain a better understanding of any evaluation that volunteer tourism organizations may do and make publically available, I visited Go Abroad (www.goabroad.com) – a website that lists volunteer tourism opportunities by country, organization, duration, and cause – and searched for the top organizations operating in Ghana.

Of the seven “top programs” listed by Go Abroad, only one was a registered non-profit organization; all other programs were offered by for-profit volunteer tourism organizations. There was no program evaluation information available on any of the websites, meaning that there is no publically available data on how their programs are empirically justified. When these organizations did discuss their “impact”, the information provided was solely about the volunteers – how many volunteers they have sent abroad, the number of service hours volunteers have put in, and the number of countries in which the organization operates. This coincides with the arguments presented by Higgins-Desbiolles and Russell-Mundine (2008), that any analysis done by volunteer tourism organizations is often done in order to satisfy tourist demands and raise profit.

Of course it is possible that volunteer tourism organizations do program evaluation internally, with the results being unavailable to the public. This, however, points to the priorities of the organizations being growth rates and profits as opposed to creating tangible change. Instead of being marketed as being an effective program for creating change within a developing community, these programs are instead marketed as fun and interesting experiences for tourists looking for a different kind of holiday.

Who are Volunteer Tourists?

In an article written for *The Guardian*, a Unicef officer is quoted as saying “when most people think of the UN now they think of Angelina Jolie on a crusade, not the work that goes on in the field” (McDougall, 2006), making humanitarianism, international development, and the creation of change seem attractive and achievable (Mostafanezhad, 2013a). Reflecting the increase in visible celebrity humanitarianism by women like Angelina Jolie and Emma Watson, young women now comprise more than 80% of all volunteer tourists worldwide (Mostafanezhad, 2013a). Although Mostafanezhad recognizes that not all female volunteer tourists aspire to be Angelina Jolie, she argues that there are “several consistent images in celebrity humanitarianism that are well represented in volunteer tourism” (Mostafanezhad, 2013a, p. 492), including images of “hand holding, hugs, laughing and a white woman surrounded by numerous darker skinned children” (p. 492).

The gendered dynamics of volunteer tourism is consistent with findings from a number of previous studies on gender and volunteering. According to Karniol, Grosz, and Schorr (2003), “girls and individuals high in femininity evidenced higher caring scores than did boys and individuals high in masculinity” (p. 17), and females were more likely to adopt behaviours that were related to caring such as volunteering (Karniol et al., 2003; van Goethem et al., 2012). In

the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2016) reported that the rate of volunteering for women (27.8%) was greater than that of men (21.8%) in 2015. Feminist theorists such as Gilligan (1993) argue that this may be due to the idea that women tend to place greater emphasis on caring, relationships, and helping than men, who are more inclined to emphasize impersonal reasoning and rule making.

Like volunteer tourism, which is itself both volunteer-oriented and vacation-oriented, voluntourists – that is, volunteer tourists – can largely be categorized into these two mindsets (Wright, 2013). Wright (2013) found that for the volunteer-minded tourist, motivations to pursue international volunteering opportunities can include giving back, education, and cultural immersion; similarly, Stoddert and Rogerson (2004) found that “helping the poor” was the primary motivation for people who volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in South Africa.

Even amongst volunteer-motivated tourists, Sin (2009) found that out of the eleven volunteer tourists she interviewed, all eleven cited their desire to travel as a motivation to pursue volunteer tourism; in contrast, however, “only two responded with a strong statement that their main motivation is to volunteer and contribute to the local community” (Sin, 2009, p. 489). Contrarily, however, in research on volunteer tourists in Guatemala, their emphasis seemed to be placed on “doing good” (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, p. 116), while “getting to know Guatemalan culture better” (p. 116) was only a secondary goal. Other motivations cited by volunteers included, pleasure, language practice, socializing, resume-building, and personal growth (Everingham, 2015; Wright, 2013).

What comes as a surprise in the research is the lack of consensus as to the characteristics of those who choose to become volunteer tourists; in fact, many of the conclusions in the literature are contrary. Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, and Pomfret (2004) state that one of the

primary characteristics of new tourists, of which volunteer tourists are a part, “is their need to escape from everyday routines in a bid to achieve some form of fulfilment” (p. 59); in their case study on Habitat for Humanity South Africa, however, Stoddart and Rogerson (2004), found the opposite: “the group of surveyed volunteers were not searching for an escapist tourism experience rather these are people who secure a sense of physical, emotional and spiritual fulfillment from actual participation in a project” (p. 315). It seems that while “escapism” may not be a common characteristic amongst volunteer tourists, the search for fulfillment is consistent: many people interviewed by Vodoivec and Jaffe (2011) claimed that through the volunteer experience, they sought to rid themselves of the materialism present in developed countries, experience “real, hard life” (p. 117), and make a difference.

Distinguishing themselves from “tourists” plays an important role in the identity of volunteer tourists, even though they themselves are engaging in a form of tourism (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). This difference was commonly constructed in two different ways; the first was the feeling that their experiences were more authentic than other tourists, while the second was that the purpose of their trip was altruistic – “come to work and make a change in a country characterized by poverty and inequality” (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, p. 122). Unlike the holiday-goers who were seen as ignorant of and contributing to the inequality of the local residents, volunteer tourists frequently felt themselves to be solutions to the problem (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011).

Common Criticisms of Volunteer Tourism

Findings indicate that there are many forms of volunteer tourism that may not benefit the host communities in the positive ways to which they profess, and instead place undue burden on those communities (Guttentag, 2009; McGehee, 2012). Positive effects are often assumed and

marketed in promotional materials, however Guttentag (2009) and Lupoli, Morse, Bailey, and Schelhas (2014) argue that these results do not include the voices from within the host community and are rarely research-based. In addition to a few research-backed results in promotional materials, there are a number of other common criticisms of volunteer tourism, including the promotion of dependency, a neglect of locals' priorities, the "othering" of the locals, and the promotion of neoliberal ideologies. In addition, the following section will take into account the macroeconomic policies surrounding aid and development in order to place volunteer tourism in its historical, economic, political, and international context.

The Cycle of Dependency

The cycle of dependency is not only an issue discussed within the literature on volunteer tourism, but is an ongoing conversation taking place when considering the place of aid in international development. In the introduction of her 2009 book, *Dead Aid*, macroeconomist Dambisa Moyo writes:

Deep in every liberal sensibility is a profound sense that in a world of moral uncertainty one idea is sacred, one belief cannot be compromised: the rich should help the poor, and the form of this help should be aid. (p. xviii)

As relevant as this quote is to the topic of international aid and development, it is equally as significant when considering the existence of volunteer tourism; not only can the rich help the poor of developing countries with aid, but also with their own two hands.

In order to gain an appreciation and understanding of volunteer tourism and the dependency that it can create in the communities in which it operates, it is first important to understand the international aid and development model of which they are a part of. International economic aid dependency is complex and multifaceted; it has been the subjects of many books and articles, and I could easily spend hundreds of pages discussing the popular literature on the

subject. What I will offer here is a brief overview of the topic of economic aid dependency, which will then lead into the kind of dependency that can arise from well-meaning NGOs and the volunteer tourism industry.

International Aid Dependency. Moyo (2009) points to three kinds of international aid:

- i) Humanitarian or emergency aid, which is mobilized in response to catastrophes such as the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal;
- ii) Charity-based aid, which is collected and distributed by organizations to “institutions or people on the ground” (p. 7); and
- iii) Systemic aid, which is provided by governments and/or institutions such as the World Bank in the form of payments made directly to other governments.

This section will focus primarily on systemic aid as a macro force that is perpetuating aid dependency in developing countries.

Systemic aid relies on what Paul Farmer (2003) calls the “liberal” view of poverty, which is the view that poverty is a problem with the poor themselves: “these people are backward and reject the technological fruits of modernity” (p. 155). After a while, with help from those who are more advanced, those countries suffering from poverty will reach a higher level of development. This form of victim-blaming, under the guise of development, “not only erases the historical creation of poverty but also implies that development is necessarily a linear process: progress will inevitably occur if the right steps are followed” (Farmer, 2003, pp. 155–156). Furthermore, it implies that the developed world has all of the answers to improvement, while assuming that the developing world has little to contribute to its own development.

With over US\$1 trillion spent on aid in Africa over the past fifty years, it is important to note that levels of public well-being have not risen in accompaniment with economic expansion

(Moyo, 2009). Even in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania, all of which have strong overall economic performance, there has been what Lewis (2012) terms “growth without prosperity”. Even with substantial aid earmarked for development, “data on poverty and human development are showing few significant improvements, and citizens report discouragement when surveyed about attitudes and economic conditions” (P. Lewis, 2012, p. 125). Put more bluntly,

the notion that aid can alleviate systemic poverty, and has done so, is a myth. Millions in Africa are poorer today because of aid; misery and poverty have not ended but have increased. Aid has been, and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic, and humanitarian disaster for most parts of the developing world (Moyo, 2009, p. xix).

If there is strong evidence that systemic aid has not been successful in alleviating poverty in the developing world, how has it created dependency in these countries? By many governments in Africa aid tends to be seen as a permanent income, which means that policymakers have little incentive to look for other forms of cash-flow to finance long-term development (P. Lewis, 2012; Moyo, 2009). When aid is permanent and expected, governments become reliant on the income and are thus more beholden to outside donors instead of their internal peoples.

The result of this aid-dependency is “that instead of having a functioning Africa, managed by Africans, for Africans, what is left is one where outsiders attempt to map its destiny and call the shots” (Moyo, 2009, p. 67). Many of the policy decisions of African countries are determined by these external donors – whether they be governments of developed countries or organizations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (P. Lewis, 2012). The grant or loan money received by developing countries often has strings attached in terms of developmental benchmarks, which are often “fiscal balance, low inflation, and market-determined exchange rates” (P. Lewis, 2012, p. 132). In order to achieve these benchmarks,

however, the choice made by ruling governments is often to lower expenditures and levy user fees on social services (Lewis, 2012) instead of prioritizing pro-active long-term development.

Although many countries, such as Ghana, have a growing economic performance, there lacks “an autonomous domain of civil society that can effectively press politicians for better policies or economic performance” (P. Lewis, 2012, p. 131). In consequence, there is little motivation for government bodies to produce policies that protect and improve status for their constituents. Distribution of financial resources, then, is rarely driven by social, policy-driven agendas (P. Lewis, 2012; Moyo, 2009).

Moyo (2009) expands upon this idea:

relatedly, in a world of aid-dependency, poor countries’ governments lose the need to pursue tax revenues. Less taxation might sound good, but the absence of taxation leads to a breakdown in natural checks and balances between the government and its people (p. 66)

In return for taxes, governments tend to provide for their citizens; likewise, citizens can then exercise greater influence over government policies – like the “no taxation without representation” of the Boston tea party. Then, due to a lack of “checks and balances”, governments require more aid in order to contribute to the social and economic development of the country, beginning the cycle anew.

Dependency and Volunteer Tourism. Moyo (2009) highlights an example of aid that we frequently hear in the media:

There’s a mosquito net maker in Africa. He manufactures around 500 nets a week. He employs ten people, who (as with many African countries) each have to support upwards of fifteen relatives. However hard they work, they can’t make enough nets to combat the malaria-carrying mosquito.

Enter vociferous Hollywood movie star who rallies the masses, and goads Western governments to collect and send 100,000 mosquito nets to the afflicted region, at a cost of a million dollars. The nets arrive, the nets are distributed, and a 'good' deed is done.

With the market flooded with foreign nets, however, our mosquito net maker is promptly put out of business. His ten workers can no longer support their 150 dependants (who are now forced to depend on handouts), and one mustn't forget that in a maximum of five years the majority of the imported nets will be torn, damaged and of no further use. (p. 44)

This, Moyo highlights, is the paradox between the macro and micro. While a short-term intervention can be effective, there may be few, if any, long-term benefits. In fact, the intervention may destroy pre-existing businesses and livelihoods, leaving the community worse-off than it had been. Furthermore, when those nets become useless over time, there will be no local business to fulfill the demand for the nets. What began as a good deed has created dependency on foreign aid in a community that had previously been at least partially self-sufficient.

A similar paradox exists in the volunteer tourism industry, where what begins as a good deed can promote dependency within the communities the organizations seek to help. The presence of free labour in the form of volunteer tourists can disrupt the local economy by replacing jobs that could more easily be done by local peoples (Guttentag, 2009); in fact, in a study on short-term mission trips done by Ver Beek (2006), one promoter who worked with the agency that brought the volunteers stated “They [the volunteers] gather money to come here to do work, work that we are capable of doing” (p. 483). Not only do the volunteers work for free, they pay for the opportunity to do work that could be done – and quite possibly done better – by the people of the community they are visiting (Guttentag, 2009; B. Lough, McBride, Sherraden, & O'Hara, 2011; Van Engen, 2000). Volunteers can encumber the local community due to their lack of language, relevant qualifications, experience, and training, easily becoming a burden on resources that would be better spent providing services to the community (B. Lough et al., 2011).

Dependency in volunteer tourism does not only emerge as physical dependency on labour or goods, but as dependency on the “knowledge” and “expertise” that volunteers are seen as

having. Wearing (2001) noted this risk, stating that a danger with volunteer tourism “is that volunteers can reiterate the ethos of the ‘expert’, thus promoting deference in the local community to outside knowledge, therefore contributing to the curtailment of self-sufficiency” (p. 51). This is especially visceral when considering the colonial mentality – a form of internalized oppression that Fanon (2004) argues leads to self-doubt, confusion of identity, and feelings of inferiority to the colonizers that can continue long after the colonizers have left.

This kind of aid in the form of volunteerism has a similar effect to economic aid: ultimately, aid-dependency in both of these forms further undermines the knowledge and abilities of those in developing countries to determine their own best policies, practices, and outcomes. The cycle of dependency that began in the 1950s in Africa (Moyo, 2009) has continued to the present day in the form of international aid, charity, and, finally volunteer tourism.

What can be seen here in dissecting dependency is the interplay between the macro and the micro; while looking at individual examples of volunteer tourism, it is important to see those examples in terms of the important macro concepts that inform them. Volunteer tourism does not exist in a vacuum, but exists largely due to the attitudes that have sprung out of decades of aid dependency and charity.

Neglecting Locals

Guttentag (2009) uses an example found in a Guardian article: “a group of Ecuadorian villagers returned from work one day to find that volunteer tourists had painted the villagers’ houses without any prior consultation” (p. 543). Instead of taking time to discover what it is that the villagers saw as priority in their community, the organization seemed to feel as though it knew the needs of the community. As the volunteer tourism industry grows, the need for local

community support and involvement decreases, allowing volunteers from developed countries to play the role of the “expert” in communities about which they know very little (Guttentag, 2009), leading to the increased likelihood that volunteer tourism will not achieve the intended positive effects. In ethnographic research done by Palacios (2010), it was common for locals to believe that volunteers “were representatives of superior Western knowledge” (p. 869). Volunteers, then, are perceived as being “in a better position of power to judge and comment on the aid-recipients” (Sin, 2009, p. 496). As evidenced by the example of the painted houses above, the volunteer can take on the persona of “expert”, where they enact the type of development and improvement that their organization sees as important. This can promote deference in the local community and, as result, self-sufficiency can decrease (Wearing, 2001). By not taking into account the priorities of the local community and instead creating their own agendas for aid and development, volunteer tourism organizations are ultimately expressing that they know what is best for the community; this is an inherently Othering relationship.

Even if locals’ desires are taken into consideration, however, volunteer tourism can still be seen as “as an over-simplification of international development that has potential to undermine larger development initiatives” (McGehee, 2012, p. 86) due to the complex social, economic, and political structures that create and maintain poverty in developing countries. Because of the dual nature of volunteer tourism as being both holiday and volunteer experience, there is concern that the “‘holiday’ side to volunteering abroad invites participants to see their host country with an ‘innocent gaze’: one that denies his or her own (colonialist) history for a better holiday experience” (Clost, 2014, p. 234). According to Kate Simpson (2009 in Clost, 2014), this leads to a group of young people who “claim powerful knowledges without having to take responsibility” (Simpson, 2009 in Clost, 2014, p. 234). Without understanding the powerful

historical, social, and economic roots of poverty and social injustice in developing countries, it is not possible for volunteers to make substantial lasting change to society as a whole.

In many volunteer tourism situations, the presence of free labour in the form of volunteers has the potential to harm a community's local economy (Caton & Santos, 2009; Guttentag, 2009; Hartman et al., 2014). In a March 2016 article for the New York Times Magazine, Kushner offers his experience with a similar scenario:

Several years ago, when I was working as a reporter based in Haiti, I came upon a group of older Christian missionaries in the mountains above Port-au-Prince, struggling with heavy shovels to stir a pile of cement and sand. They were there to build a school alongside a Methodist church. Muscular Haitian masons stood by watching, perplexed and a bit amused at the sight of men and women who had come all the way from the United States to do a mundane construction job.

He continued by highlighting the thousands of dollars that those volunteer tourists must have spent in participating in the mission trip and the absurdity of these unskilled tourists doing a job that could have more easily been done by local masons: “perhaps those Haitian masons could have found weeks of employment with a decent wage. Instead, at least for several days, they were out of a job” (Kushner, 2016).

The Othering of Locals

Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) state that “otherness [is] the process of attaching moral codes of inferiority to difference” (p. 300). It can be either a conscious or unconscious individual activity that leads to social distance and alienation between the self and those who are seen as “different” (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). According to Todorov and Howard (2006), there are three primary dimensions of the relationship between an individual – the Self – and one outside of the individual – the Other: “value judgments (the Other is perceived as good/bad), social distance (the Other is perceived as distant psychologically and physically), and knowledge (the history and culture of the Other is relatively unknown)” (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012, p. 300). In

addition to these dimensions, Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) found four mechanisms at work behind this Othering process:

1. Objectification. Individuals become stereotypes of their group, and their common humanity is ignored.
2. Decontextualization. “A focus on behavior abstracted from the context in which this behavior was developed and continues to exist” (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012, p. 300). This can include a detachment from symbolic structures, policy structures, socio-economic structures, or a detachment from the immediate context.
3. Dehistorization. A detachment from an individual or community’s unique history, which can lead to a distortion of understanding when considering the present situation.
4. Deauthorization. Often occurs in research, when a researcher does not acknowledge their role in the selective interpretation of results.

Upon embarking on their volunteer tourism experience, most volunteers were aware of inequalities between not only themselves and the local communities, but between their countries and the host country. In response to this, volunteers felt as though they were working toward reducing this inequality (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). Although one of the goals of volunteer tourism can be breaking stereotypes through exposure to new cultural experiences, there is evidence that the opposite may happen (Guttentag, 2009; McLennan, 2014; Mostafanezhad, 2013a, 2013b; Sin, 2010; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). The desire of volunteer to “do good” inherently normalizes the “First World giver and Third World receiver discourse” (Mostafanezhad, 2013a, p. 495). By simply arriving in a developing country to “do good”, the volunteer is replicating the “narration of need and help” (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, p. 119) and presents the developing country as the beneficiary of the volunteer’s charity.

This dichotomy between the ways in which volunteers and host communities are characterized creates an inherent separation between the “generous and kind” donors and the “needy and deficient” recipients of aid (B. J. Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, p. 209) and presents the objectification, decontextualization, and dehistoricization of the community. Lough and Carter-Black (2015) expand on this, by arguing that “the language and images used in marketing strategies of volunteer organizations (particularly short-term volunteer tourism) often create visions that reinforce binary representations of Africans as different, exotic, primitive and in need of help” (p. 209).

A Form of Neoliberalism and Neocolonialism

The argument that volunteer tourism is influenced by neoliberal ideologies can be found throughout the literature (Everingham, 2015; Higgins-Desbiolles & Russell-Mundine, 2008; Hutnyk, 1996; Luh Sin et al., 2015; Mohan & Stokke, 2000; Mostafanezhad, 2013a, 2013b; Sharpe & Dear, 2013; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011); volunteer tourism enacts the idea that international development can be privatized, packaged, commodified, and sold to customers looking for an out-of-the-ordinary holiday experience (Hartman et al., 2014; Higgins-Desbiolles & Russell-Mundine, 2008; Sharpe & Dear, 2013; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) clarify that neoliberal ideologies can first be found in the “outsourcing and privatization of development practice, and, second, in the commodification and marketing of development activities” (p. 112). VSAs have found a way to capitalize on the altruism of individuals in the developed world while using the discourse of development and aid, meaning that they are simultaneously “competitive, entrepreneurial, market-based, individualized actors *and* caring, responsible, active, global citizens” (Luh Sin et al., 2015, p. 122)

Instead of supporting state-led development models, NGOs are now touted as the appropriate organizations to facilitate economic and social development in communities:

Rather than promoting democracy and efficiency, the outsourcing of development may undermine the capabilities of the local state. The financial dependence of private sector development actors on foreign donors can trigger both internal competition and external cooptation. (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, p. 112)

Development then is not the focus of a country as a whole, but is localized in smaller regions or communities, leading to competition for financial resources, reliance on foreign charity, and uneven developmental growth.

It is evident, then, that volunteer tourism is a reflection of this greater overall trend of the privatization of development (Kapoor, 2013; Luh Sin et al., 2015; Roy, 2012). Luh Sin et al. (2015) identify two ways in which this is demonstrated. First, development is no longer entirely in the hands of the state, but in the hands of NGOs, VSAs, and well-meaning volunteers from developed countries; second, there has been a de-politicization of development, where poverty is now seen as a challenge to overcome (Luh Sin et al., 2015):

In this way, volunteer tourists have seemingly become ideal providers of development in ways that obscure the structures of global capitalism that perpetuate poverty and inequality (p. 122).

By associating developmental aid with privatization and commodification, there has been a reproduction of neo-colonial binaries: active experts from developed countries versus the passive beneficiaries of developed countries who are characterized as “backward and needy” (Everingham, 2015; Mostafanezhad, 2013a, 2013b). Hartman et al. (2014) writes:

In spite of these criticisms, the continued, and likely increasing, demand for international volunteer programs will drive the market. There will continue to be those in more developed countries who wish to ‘make a difference’ while traveling, and those in developing countries who will be willing to, for a variety of reasons, cooperate with international institutions and operators (p. 109).

There is another argument to be made about volunteer tourism as a form of neocolonialism. The colonial historical roots of inferiority/superiority are replicated in the aid relationships between the developed and developing world (Kothari, 2006; B. J. Lough & Carter-Black, 2015). Kothari (2006) argues that the discourses that were present in colonial times – that is, “where those in the South come to believe that they have lower capacity for development” (B. J. Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, p. 209) – remain present in the present discourse of aid and development. Put more simply, colonialism can be re-enacted through the idea that even unskilled volunteers from developed countries who have no knowledge of the current social, political, or economic circumstances of their host country, can improve the lives of people and communities in developing countries (Palacios, 2010). The perceptions of the world as separated into “developed” and “developing” can influence the ways in which parties perceive themselves: “by the very definition of help and assistance, racialized associations with aid are symbolic expressions of Western superiority” (B. J. Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, p. 209). In this way, whiteness becomes associated with “progress, power, and higher status” (B. J. Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, p. 209) and can negatively affect the recipients’ senses of power, agency, and ability to create change.

Ethical Volunteer Tourism

Despite some neoliberal roots of volunteer tourism, the industry continues to grow and volunteers continue to travel to developing countries to offer their “expertise” in international development. In light of this, there is a necessity for a framework for ethical engagement that can be easily understood and applied by VSAs, volunteers, and host communities, and that seeks to not only increase positive benefits, but decrease the negative consequences of volunteer tourism (Hartman et al., 2014). There must be impetus, then, to maximize benefits for both the volunteers

as well as the host communities that volunteer tourism purports to help (Hartman et al., 2014).

This section will outline two potential frameworks for ethical volunteer tourism; the first uses the Fair Trade Learning model, and the second shifts the focus from development to mutuality. I will then dissect these frameworks using a social justice approach in order to determine whether or not they are truly ethical for the communities that host volunteer tourism initiatives.

The concept of mutuality is highlighted in both frameworks, as well as by other researchers. For example, Lough and Carter-Black (2015) note the importance of mutuality by describing two of the primary benefits of a mutual exchange; it can help in “altering the unilateral helper/beneficiary mentality” (p. 217), and “community members may more accurately view the relationships as a partnership or exchange rather than as unilateral aid” (p. 217). What is not discussed in these articles, however, are the limitations of mutuality, reciprocity, and individuality in creating a truly just system of social change in developing countries.

Fair Trade Learning in Volunteer Tourism

The focus of Fair Trade Learning is on engaging the role of education in creating an equitable, just, and sustainable world by prioritizing “reciprocity in relationships through cooperative, cross-cultural participation in learning, service, and civil society efforts”(Hartman et al., 2014, p. 110). In order to create ethically responsible volunteer tourism, Hartman et al. (2014) suggest three sets of standards: the core principles of the volunteer tourism program, community-centred standards, and volunteer-centred standards.

There are eight core principles:

- 1.1 Programs are organized with community and student outcomes in mind.
- 1.2 Community voice and direction.
- 1.3 Commitment and sustainability
- 1.4 Transparency.
- 1.5 Environmental sustainability and footprint reduction.
- 1.6 Economic sustainability

- 1.7 Deliberate diversity, intercultural Contact, and reflection.
- 1.8 Global community building (Hartman et al., 2014, pp. 112–113)

The core principles would require buy-in from all stakeholders – the organization, the community, and the volunteers – in order to be considered ethically just.

The eight student-centred standards are focused on volunteers not only during the volunteer tourism program, but prior to departure and after their return home as well:

- 2.1 Ethical purpose encouraging reflection and growth.
- 2.2 Student preparation.
- 2.3 Connecting context to broader learning.
- 2.4 Challenge and support from program organizers.
- 2.5 Outcomes consistent with program length.
- 2.6 Instruction and mentoring.
- 2.7 Communicative skills and language learning.
- 2.8 Preparation for healthy return to home communities (Hartman et al., 2014, pp. 114–115).

Finally are the seven community-centred standards that would ensure the volunteer tourism programs have a positive effect upon the communities:

- 3.1 Purpose. Program administrators should engage in continuous dialogue with community partners regarding the partnership's potential to contribute to community-driven efforts.
- 3.2 Community preparation. Community organizations and partners should receive clear pre-program clarity.
- 3.3 Timing, duration, and repetition. Program administrators should cooperate with community members to arrive at acceptable program timing, lengths, and repetition of groups in communities.
- 3.4 Group size. Program administrators must discuss ideal group size with community members and arrange program accordingly.
- 3.5 Local sourcing. The program should maximize the economic benefits to local residents by cooperating with community members to ensure program participant needs are addressed through indigenous sources.
- 3.6 Direct service, advocacy, education, project management, and organization building. To the extent desired by the community, the program involves students as service-learners, interns, and researchers in locally accountable organizations. Students learn from, contribute skills or knowledge to, and otherwise support local capacity through community improvement actions over a continuous period of time.
- 3.7 Reciprocity. Consistent with stated best practices in service-learning, public health, and development, efforts are made to move toward reciprocal relationships with community partners (Hartman et al., 2014, pp. 113–114).

Following the standards set out in each group would enable a volunteer tourism program to operate in an ethical manner that would be maximally beneficial to participants and organizations, and also – most importantly – to the communities that are supposed to be helped through volunteer tourism (Hartman et al., 2014).

Moving from Development to Mutuality

Everingham (2015) offers a compelling examination of a volunteer tourism organization in Baños de Agua Santa, Ecuador, Fundacion Arte del Mundo. Instead of commodifying the neediness of developing countries as many other organizations tend to do in order to gain volunteers, Fundacion Arte del Mundo focuses on creating a space where art, creativity, and intercultural dialogue are encouraged. The focus, Everingham argues, should turn away from the paternalistic idea of “help” to the ideas of mutuality and intercultural learning:

Promoting intercultural communication within a context of mutuality is vital in moving away from neo-colonial paternalistic binaries. Opportunities for intercultural communication and learning, where all participants learn from each other, can provide opportunities for both volunteers and locals to rethink these problematic cultural assumptions and the binaries such as ‘expert/beneficiary’ embedded in them (Everingham, 2015, p. 179).

Mutuality cannot simply be assumed by organizations promoting cultural exchange; the promotion of intercultural learning and mutuality must be intentional on the part of the organization.

Examples of this mutuality can be found in Funacion Arte del Mundo’s language exchange program. While volunteers were expected to have a basic knowledge of Spanish, the activities throughout the organization were conducted solely in Spanish, allowing volunteers – particularly those not proficient in the language – to experience how it feels to be the linguistic “other” (Everingham, 2015); “volunteers were able to experience what it was like to be in a

position where they needed help speaking Spanish from the Spanish speakers. The binary of expert/beneficiary was subverted in these interactions” (Everingham, 2015, p. 184). Similarly, the children who used Funacion Arte del Mundo’s activities were recognized by the volunteers as being helpful in learning the language.

This idea of language learning is subversive to the general neo-colonial expert/beneficiary model of development so often seen in volunteer tourism programs. Instead of being seen for what they lack, members of the local community were able to share their knowledge and expertise with the volunteers. Defining a community by what it lacks quickly leads to the neo-colonial image of volunteers as the experts who are there to fix the community; it is only “through an intentional reconfiguring of volunteer tourism *away from* development aid as an inevitable point of reference, *towards* valuing engagement with intercultural communication and mutuality as important in its own right, that new relationships can emerge and flourish” (Everingham, 2015, p. 187). Although the goals of Funacion Arte del Mundo do not specifically target poverty through developmental aid, Everingham concludes that the organization still plays a role in the development of the community – simply in a less paternalistic way.

Critiques from a Social Justice Approach

In order to consider whether or not these frameworks are truly ethical from a social justice approach, it is important to first outline what a social justice approach actually is. In *Pathologies of Power* (2003), Paul Farmer outlines the difference between three responses to injustice: charity, development, and social justice. It is important to note that it is only the social justice approach that allows privileged individuals such as academics, organizations, and

volunteers, to adopt a stance that could prevent structural inequalities and, as Farmer states, “pathologies of power” (Farmer, 2003, p. 21).

Charity. Farmer (2003) highlights the tendency for individuals who see charity as the answer to developmental problems to “regard those needing charity as intrinsically inferior” (p. 153). This is something, he states, that can be striking or subtle, but is often lurking inside all of us. Instead of seeing poverty as a result of historical, economic, social, and political forces, poverty is thought to come from individual shortcomings and flaws. Furthermore, this approach takes for granted the “fact” that there will always be privilege and poverty – those who have, and those who do not. Farmer points to Paulo Freire to emphasize this point: “in order to have the continued opportunity to express their ‘generosity,’ the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this ‘generosity,’ which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty” (Freire, 2000, p. 44). Without injustice, there is no need for charity – yet charity does little to actively seek and combat injustice.

Charity presumes that people must take personal responsibility for their circumstances, ignoring the structural inequalities that create the space for poverty and injustice in the first place. Freire (2000) argues, however, that

true generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. ... True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world (p. 45).

The goal of helping others should not be simply to give them aid, it should be in addressing the structural injustices and inequalities that force people into poverty. History plays a significant role in determining the “haves” and “have-nots” of the world, and in order to make any substantial, lasting progress, there might be a fight for structural change.

Development. The development approach, like that of charity, often takes a victim-blaming stance that again denies the “historical creation of poverty” (Farmer, 2003, p. 155). It is not due to structural inequalities that people are in poverty, but due to their own shortcomings and, if certain steps are followed, progress will occur. Using this approach to examine poverty and inequality, underdevelopment exists because “these people are backward and reject the technological fruits of modernity” (Farmer, 2003, p. 155); this implies that, should they embrace the modern realities of developed countries, they too will progress and advance. Of course, those steps are most often dictated by developed countries that have already “made it” in terms of development and progress.

Again, Freire’s concept of “generosity” can be invoked. It is not enough to model development, as erases and ignores the unique historical and social truths of the developing world; people who would like to be truly generous must work to fight the structural barriers that create and maintain inequality. Even with all of the developmental aid that has been supplied to developing countries (upwards of US\$1 trillion in Africa since the 1950s, according to Moyo (2009)), the outcome gap has continued to grow between the rich and the poor (Farmer, 2003).

Social Justice. The social justice approach, argues Farmer (2003) is the only approach that is truly able to address the structural inequalities that maintain poverty. Not only are the conditions of poverty unacceptable, they are created due to “structural violence that is human-made” (Farmer, 2003, p. 157). Making a “preferential option for the poor” does not require charity or development, but social justice; the idea that we, as members of the privileged class, must work *with* the poor “as they struggle to change their situations” (p. 157). Unlike the previous two approaches, the social justice approach acknowledges that while people living in poverty may have some semblance of control over their lives, the

control of lives is related to control of land, systems of production, and the formal political and legal structures in which lives are enmeshed. With time, both wealth and control have become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few. The opposite trend is desired by those working for social justice (Farmer, 2003, p. 158).

Farmer argues that in examining poverty and injustice, the analysis must be both historically deep and geographically broad. The realities of all lives is that they are linked historically to events that happened in the past and interconnected geographically to the actions of the powerful in other countries globally: “the world that is satisfying to us is the same world that is utterly devastating to them” (Brown, 1993, p. 44)

Working for social justice requires working *with* in order to create structural change for the poor; it necessitates giving up privilege and power, and prioritizing the needs and voices of the oppressed. Again, from Freire:

This lesson and this apprenticeship must come, however, from the oppressed themselves and from those who are truly solidary with them. ... Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? (Freire, 2000, p. 45)

The fight for social change must be led by those who are oppressed, as they are most aware of the changes that must be made in order to ensure their equality. As privileged individuals from the developing world, our mandate is not to lead, but to be allies and work alongside the oppressed in the fight for justice.

Volunteer Tourism and the Social Justice Approach. The two frameworks I initially addressed both make an attempt to honour local voices and experiences in their journey toward creating a more ethical volunteer tourism industry. Neither framework, however, operates using a social justice approach, instead opting to focus on reciprocity and mutuality – concepts that are more present in a developmental approach. While on the surface these seem to be noble goals, there are limitations to these intentions; the ideas of reciprocity and mutuality assert that there is

a level playing field between the host communities and volunteer tourists while ignoring the structural inequalities and privilege differentials amongst them.

“Giving back” and “helping the poor”, two of the primary motivations for volunteering internationally (Wright, 2013), evoke a developmental sentiment – progress can be made in the developing world if individuals from the developed world show them the way.

Developmentalism ignores and erases the structural inequalities of race which remain part of the everyday reality in the lives of the people in these communities.

Furthermore, these frameworks of reciprocity and mutuality maintain change at the level of individuals instead of addressing the structural inequality that sustains poverty; it is always *within* the existing, unjust society instead of working to create systems-level changes. In order for volunteer tourism to be compatible with the social justice approach, there must be some sort of knowledge, advocacy, or transformation of the structures of oppression. At the very least, volunteers and the organizations in which they operate require a critical and reflective awareness about inequalities in global economic and political structures. Instead of mutuality and reciprocity, there should be a focus on the systems that reproduce injustice and a desire to destabilize the status quo.

Input from Locals and Finding the Gap

What can be seen from the above two examples of ethical volunteer tourism is that the input of locals is not only valuable, but necessary (Everingham, 2015; Hartman et al., 2014). It is notable, however, that the perspective of locals is lacking from the academic research on volunteer tourism; if volunteer tourism itself requires the voices of local community members to be ethical, then the research itself requires those voices as well. Both Sin (2010) and Wright

(2013) attempt to integrate the views of local community members into the research on volunteer tourism, but both research projects ultimately fail to adequately give a voice to locals.

In her research on volunteer tourism in Cambodia, Sin (2010) interviewed local Cambodians (5), NGO workers (7), and missionary workers (2). While most respondents shared that volunteer tourism can be directly beneficial to communities, there was an awareness that the relationship between volunteers and hosts is an unequal one. Like in mass tourism, volunteer tourism is rife with the same power hierarchies; it maintains existing power differentials while replicating the position of the developed world as responsible for the poor developing world. While Sin (2010) makes an attempt to integrate critiques of volunteer tourism with the experiences of local community members, there is still a focus on the role of the developed world in aid instead of offering an analysis of the views of locals that is evident in the smaller number of interviewees from the host community.

Similarly, Wright (2013) attempts to integrate the perception of prospective volunteer tourists with members of a community that has experienced volunteer tourism in a research project examining the perceptions of the volunteer tourism sector from the perspectives of the volunteers and the hosts. The research consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews with 26 tourism students – seven hosts from Nepal with some experience of volunteer tourism and 19 potential volunteer tourists (ten of whom had had some previous experience with volunteer tourism).

The findings of the research demonstrate that the perceptions of volunteer tourism vary between volunteers and hosts. In terms of the possible educational benefit of the volunteer tourism experience, hosts presented positive views, with six out of seven respondents believing that the educational benefit was present for both hosts and volunteers; 12 out of 19 volunteers,

however, perceived that educational benefits were for the host only. Similarly, volunteers perceived there to be a larger overall benefit to the host community than they themselves. Hosts, however, believed volunteer tourism to be less altruistic, perceiving the motivations of volunteers to be around travelling, resume-building, and meeting people.

Although Wright's (2013) research remains an important stepping stone in developing an abundance of literature on host community views of volunteer tourism, many of the participants, both volunteers and hosts, had not had direct experience with volunteer tourism. This means that many of their answers are strictly hypothetical and are not based on actual experience.

While both studies do add to the limited literature related to locals' experiences of volunteer tourism, there is simply not enough research to draw any significant conclusions – other than there needs to be *more*. It can be seen, then, that the importance in the existing research remains on the “us” in developed countries instead of those in developing countries that volunteer tourism is meant to help. Although there have been attempts made to highlight the voices of locals within communities that are host to volunteer tourism, there seems to be a disproportionate amount of research focusing on other aspects of volunteer tourism. The goal of this research has been to begin emphasising the importance of local voices within the volunteer tourism literature in order to fill this gap. The hope is to create a base for further research to be completed in an effort to create a more ethically sustainable and socially just volunteer tourism industry.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter documents the methodology of this research project, beginning by outlining the research questions that guided its trajectory, followed by an examination of the theoretical framework, and research methods, with rationale provided for each methodological decision.

Purpose of the Study

It is evident from the research around volunteer tourism that local perspectives are sorely lacking. According to literature found during the literature review process, ethical volunteer tourism is aided by the inclusion of mutuality (Everingham, 2015; Hartman et al., 2014); even so, the emphasis of much of the research remains on the experiences of the volunteers from developed countries. This dichotomy in the research furthers the “othering” problem noted in the literature review. Although many researchers identify the lack of attention directed towards host communities as a problem (Conran, 2011; Keese, 2011; Lupoli et al., 2014; McGehee, 2012; Sin, 2010; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wright, 2013), there is still little research that has been done. The importance in research, then, remains on the “us” in developed countries instead of the “them” in developing countries that volunteer tourism is meant to help.

Research Questions

The primary objective of this research is to advocate for the voices of members of host communities and to emphasize their importance in developing, maintaining, and creating worthwhile volunteer tourism experiences for the community. With this goal in mind, three primary research questions were developed:

- i. What are locals’ experiences of volunteer tourism within their community?
- ii. How do locals perceive volunteer tourists and the organizations that bring them to the community?

iii. How can volunteer tourism be improved within your community?

From these question, it is possible to begin understanding local perspectives on volunteer tourism with the hope of eventually creating a more ethical volunteer tourism industry.

Theoretical Foundations

Epistemological Framework

This research uses the framework of interpretivism, as the goal of interpretivism is not to explain phenomena, but to understand and “comprehend the perspectives, opinions, emotional responses and attitudes held by participants” (Carey, 2012, p. 74). Interpretivism arose out of criticisms of the positivist tradition in the sciences (Bailey, 2007; Carey, 2012), which values objectivity and assumes that the same scientific method that can be applied to the natural sciences can be applied to complex social interactions and society as a whole. Interpretivism challenges this objective view of the world in favour of subjective understanding, seeing “the social world as constructed by social actors through their vastly complex interactions in concrete situations ... Society is what individuals are and what they do” (Douglas, 1984 in Carey, 2012, p. 74).

In the interpretive paradigm, the researcher becomes a part of the research, as the research cannot exist independently of the researcher (Bailey, 2007). This does not mean, however, that a researcher is free to insert their bias into the research in order to manipulate the findings; instead, it requires that researchers take into account their own values, characteristics, and beliefs and are aware of any influences those may have on the participants’ realities. By taking this into account and maintaining awareness throughout the research process, a researcher can increase the “trustworthiness” of the research project (2007, p. 54).

In terms of this research on host community perspectives of volunteer tourism, interpretivism is the ideal framework to lean upon as the goal is to understand the experiences that locals have, in conjunction with their interpretations of the world around them. This focus enables participants to be keepers of their own social realities and allows them to direct me, as the researcher, to what they consider to be important.

Theoretical Frameworks

Relational-Cultural Theory. Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) began as a feminist response to traditional individualistic theories of development which “rest on separation, independence, and the bounded autonomous self as a primary and necessary goal” (West, 2005, p. 102); instead, the RCT model sees mutuality as the basis of development, which far better addresses the experiences of women and people within “other devalued cultural groups” (Comstock et al., 2008, p. 279). People are seen as interconnected with others, with the “basic human motive” as being “in connection with others, rather than the need to be gratified by others” (Kaplan in Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 47). Although originally a theory used to inform therapeutic relationships, in recent years RCT has been used to examine relationships in other contexts (West, 2005).

The concept of mutuality takes centre stage in RCT; in order for two people to have a relationship with one another, both must be growing. By doing so, the individuals “grow toward an increased capacity for respect, having an impact on the other, and being open to being changed by the other” (‘Jean Baker Miller Training Institute | Glossary of Key Terms’, 2016). In a relationship that demonstrates mutuality all of the individuals involved are participating with their full selves (Miller & Stiver, 1997), which lead to what Jean Baker Miller described as the “five good things”:

1. Each person feels a greater sense of zest (vitality, energy).
2. Each person feels more able to act and does act.
3. Each person has a more accurate picture of her/himself and the other person(s).
4. Each person feels a greater sense of worth.
5. Each person feels more connected to other person(s) and feels a greater motivation for connections with other people beyond those in the specific relationship (Miller, 1986, p. 2)

In considering the characteristics of socially just volunteer tourism, an acknowledgement of power and privilege was at the forefront. In applying this framework to volunteer tourism, the benefits of an exchange characterized by giving up privilege can be seen in Miller's five good things. Birrell & Freyd (2006) stress the importance of moving away from a

system that sees nothing wrong with objectifying others in the name of help, that rewards power dynamics that, if not properly recognized, have the power to cause great harm, and that privileges individualism and rights over the bonds of human communities. (p. 60)

This kind of system can easily be seen in the current popularized practice of volunteer tourism. While power and privilege are of importance, so is the bond between individuals, communities, and, on a macro level, countries. It is only through acknowledging and understanding historical and political complexities of these connections that power can be given up in order to be critical of the systems that reproduce the status quo.

In addition to this concept of mutuality RCT leaves space to discuss power, which Miller defined as the "capacity to produce a change" ('Jean Baker Miller Training Institute | Glossary of Key Terms', 2016). When considering volunteer tourism, it is often the volunteers who are seen as the individuals with change-making capacity, thus putting them in a position of "the expert" with "power over" (2016) members of the host community. Instead of this "power over" dynamic, "power with" – the idea that "more can be accomplished through collaborative efforts than through hierarchical arrangements" (2016) – should be prioritized.

Anti-Colonial Discursive Framework. In accompaniment to RCT, an anti-colonial discursive framework is used to deconstruct the neo-colonial nature of volunteer tourism as an industry. As a theoretical perspective, this framework has a number of important characteristics that are relevant to the discussion of volunteer tourism. First, the anti-colonial approach recognizes the importance of local knowledge, histories, experiences, and interactions (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001); power, it argues, does not only belong to the colonizer, as “local and social practice and tools utilized by the colonized to survive the experience are also sites of power” (Cambell, 2006, p. 195). Additionally, the anti-colonialist framework examines the role of structures within a society that replicate and reproduce inequality in order to resist these structures (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Most importantly, in using this framework in relation to volunteer tourism, it is important to maintain an awareness of historical, social, and institutional structures which maintain knowledge and intellectualism (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001) in order to support knowledges and different methods of analysis and theorization that have been discredited by those in power (A. G. Lewis, 2012).

Looking at these tenets of anti-colonial discursive framework more closely in terms of volunteer tourism creates a set of characteristics that aid in defining the research question and methods. Anti-colonial research of volunteer tourism must:

- offer an anti-colonialist critique of volunteer tourism, as the industry can be seen as perpetuating colonialist ideals;
- construct collaborative, transparent, and reflective conceptualizations of volunteer tourism research (A. G. Lewis, 2012);
- challenge aspects of the volunteer tourism industry that perpetuate these ideals;

- respect locals' knowledge, traditions, experiences, and interactions which can aid in giving context to their experiences with volunteer tourism;
- recognize the power of locals' knowledge and experiences in relation to volunteer tourism and aid in having their voices heard, appreciated, and accounted for in volunteer tourism research and in the dissemination of volunteer tourism opportunities; and
- work within the paradigm of the local host community in "opposition to the universalizing and hegemonic Eurocentric ways of knowing that pollute the so-called 'Third World'" (Cambell, 2006, p. 195).

It is evident, then, that much of the research currently existing on volunteer tourism does not use this framework to discuss the industry. Going ahead in this research, I use this anti-colonial discursive framework to allow the voices of host community members to be heard in the overwhelming amount of literature on the effects of volunteer tourism on the privileged volunteers from the developed world.

Research Methods

Due to the nature of the research question, the research was exploratory in nature, meaning that the goal was to investigate and learn about volunteer tourism from locals, minimizing researcher bias and expectations of results. The investigation was qualitative, with the aim of capturing life and experiences as they are narrated by members of the host community.

Narrative analysis was used in order to put together a "big picture" about the experiences of members of host communities. Unlike other methods, narrative analysis "does not see stories [as] simply transmitting information or hard facts" (Carey, 2012, p. 174); instead, the narratives are "'storied accounts' or 'interpretive devices' that embody a person's sense of belonging or

understanding of themselves” (p. 174) or a phenomenon. Narrative analysis is particularly useful in allowing voices frequently excluded from research to be included, and enables deeper engagement when working in cross-cultural environments (Carey, 2012; Silverman, 2005).

As one of the primary concerns of the anti-colonial discursive framework in relation to volunteer tourism is *recognizing the power of locals’ knowledge and experiences in relation to volunteer tourism and aid in having their voices heard, appreciated, and accounted for in volunteer tourism research*, a narrative approach allowed me to preserve the integrity of the accounts of local community members. The goal was to allow members of the community to lead in the creation, interpretation, and writing of the narrative.

Location of the Research

Ghana is a middle-income country in West African that *volunteerabroad.com* touts to potential volunteers as the “safest, most stable, and most friendly of all African countries” (‘Volunteer Abroad | GoAbroad.com’, 2015). On *volunteerabroad.com*, it is one of the three most popular locations in the world for potential volunteer tourists; a search finds 243 volunteer abroad programs throughout Ghana, many of which are social programs – teaching, community building, community health, and caring for orphans are only some of the options available. Headlines such as “Volunteer at Ghana Community Schools!”, “Volunteer in Ghana and Experience an Amazing Culture,” and “Volunteer in Ghana: Affordable, Supportive, and Real Impact” (‘Volunteer Abroad | GoAbroad.com’, 2015) aim to attract potential volunteers.

Prior to deciding to complete a thesis, I had made the decision to complete an international placement to fulfill my second Master of Social Work (MSW) practicum requirement; I decided upon a local human rights organization in Accra, the capital of Ghana.

The convenience of my placement coupled with the popularity of Ghana as a site of volunteer tourism ultimately convinced me to go forward with my research.

Through a connection with the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana, Legon Campus, I was connected with Grace (pseudonym), a researcher who had recently completed research on the sustainability of internationally sponsored social programs in Kurotia (pseudonym), a community that has been host to a number of volunteer-supported initiatives. Participants in this research were recruited in Kurotia, a small city located outside of Accra but still within the Greater Accra Region. A pseudonym for the town is being used in order to protect the identities of any organizations and individuals within the community.

About Ghana. Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast, was the first Sub-Saharan country to gain independence after a long history of colonialism. First colonized by the Portuguese, then the Dutch, and finally by the British in 1807, Ghana gained independence in 1957. It is a relatively stable, multi-party democracy with a population 25 million people (BBC News, 2016). Ghana can be characterized as a religious country, with 71.2% of the population reporting to be Christian, 17.6% Islam, and 5.2% traditionalist. A small percentage – 5.3% indicated no religious affiliation (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013).

About Kurotia. Kurotia, with a population of 12,000, is the largest city and capital of a district within the Greater Accra Region with a total population of 52,000. Within the district, over 90 percent of the population is Ghanaian by birth, with small percentages being Ghanaian through naturalization or non-Ghanaian. Of those who are 11 years of age or older, 70 percent (70.7) of people are literate in English, a Ghanaian language, or both. The unemployment rate of the district is nearly seven percent (6.7%), with the rate of unemployment being slightly higher for females than for males (7.7% versus 5.6%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Recruitment and Sampling

There were three requirements for participation in this research:

1. Participants must live or have lived in a community where there is or has been volunteer tourism;
2. Participants must identify as Ghanaian;
3. Participants should either have either direct or indirect experience with volunteer tourists;
4. Participants should be over the age of 18.

After communicating the requirements of my research project with Grace, she aided in connecting me with two community members in Kurotia, one of whom was my first participant. In this way, my sample was generated through snowball sampling; I was introduced to additional participants by the initial contributors to the research. As the community was unfamiliar to me, this strategy enabled me to gain access to community members living in different areas of the city that had been host to different volunteer projects.

In order to protect confidentiality and reduce the privacy risks associated with snowball sampling, I asked participants if they would be willing to pass on information about the study, including my Ghanaian phone number, to other potential participants. In cases where potential participants were concerned about privacy, they were able to contact me via phone in order to set up an interview time; in most cases, however, participants and potential participants were not concerned about others in their community knowing about their participation in this research and would come speak to me in person after I completed other interviews.

Carey (2012) explains that sample sizes in qualitative research tend to vary greatly, however for smaller-scale studies, a sample of four to eighteen participants is the norm. I hoped to interview ten participants, however I was able to recruit nine community members to

participate in the interview process. I capped the number of participants at ten due to the time constraints of completing both an MSW placement and research in Ghana over a short period of two months; the location of the research being outside of Accra; and because a primary goal of the research was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, opinions, and beliefs of host community members instead of necessitating saturation.

Summary of Participants

All participants were long-term residents of Kurotia, either having been born in the city, or having moved to the city in their childhood. Eight of the nine participants were born in Ghana, with the remaining ninth participant being born in Nigeria and becoming a naturalized Ghanaian. The participants in this study ranged in age from early twenties to late fifties, with seven men and two women having been interviewed. Four participants had worked directly with volunteer tourists on projects in the past, another participant was an tradesman who would often be hired by a local orphanage that regularly has international volunteers; the final four participants did not have any direct experience with volunteers outside of seeing them in the community. The two women declined to have their quotes used within this research project.

Data Collection

Prior to my departure to Ghana in September of 2015, I completed a preliminary literature review, prepared a research proposal, and began creating the interview guide. As Catherine Riessman (2008) suggests, “most narrative projects in the human sciences today are based on interviews of some kind” (p. 23). Nine semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted face-to-face in Kurotia, Ghana in October and November 2015. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were chosen over other forms of data collection in order to develop rapport with participants and make them feel comfortable with my presence in a one-on-one situation.

An interview guide (see Appendix A) was used in order give direction to the interviews, however because they were semi-structured, the approach allowed me some discretion to ask new questions depending on the stories told by participants. Mishler adds:

Looking at how interviewees connect their responses into a sustained account, that is, a story, brings out problems and possibilities of interviewing that are not visible when attention is restricted to question-answer exchanges (in Riessman, 2008, p. 23).

The interviewer and the interviewee can be seen as both actively participating in the construction of a narrative; the interviewer through facilitation and questions, and the interviewee through the stories they choose to tell and the words they choose to use (2008). The use of an interview guide helped the enable this process of narrative construction. I reviewed my interview guide with the Ghanaian researcher, Grace, and adjusted my questions and probes based on her input and feedback.

Interviews were completed either in the homes of participants or in a quiet outside location. In all instances interviews were private and one-on-one. The interviews took anywhere from fifteen to thirty-five minutes; although these interviews could be regarded as short, participants provided in-depth information about their experiences with volunteer tourism. Participants were forthcoming in sharing their experiences, and were given a small \$5 gift of tea from Canada for their participation. In reflecting on the interview experience, I see that there had been a number of opportunities to probe deeper in order to gain an even richer understanding of experiences, but I was unable to complete any follow-up interviews due to my shortened stay in Ghana. These gaps, however, can be seen as opportunities for future research.

Data Analysis

With permission of the participants, interviews were recorded and were transcribed by myself no more than one month after the completion of the interview. In an effort to represent

the meanings constructed by the participants within their narratives, I used a conventional content analysis approach. In addition to the characteristics of language, content analysis focuses on the content and meaning of a text (Hsieh, 2005; Stemler, 2001) – in this case interviews. By classifying text into categories, content analysis can “provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314).

Conventional content analysis is most often used in studies that aim to explain a phenomenon and is especially useful in situations where there is limited research on the topic (Hsieh, 2005; Mayring, 2000). This makes this form of data analysis ideal for interpreting the results of the interviews with host community members. When coding the interview transcripts, I avoided the use preconceived categories in order to allow the content to speak for itself; this method of coding is common and recommended in conventional content analysis as researchers are then able to immerse themselves in the data without limiting interpretations (Hsieh, 2005; Mayring, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morgan, 1993; Morse & Field, 1995).

Following the initial coding process, codes are sorted into meaningful categories, where connections can be made between and within those categories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Hsieh, 2005; Morse & Field, 1995). Then, definitions for each category and subcategory are developed based on the findings within the research (Hsieh, 2005; Morse & Field, 1995). In relation to this research project, these categories and themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Ultimately, the goal of conventional data analysis is to provide a knowledge base that is derived directly from the participants and their unique experiences (Hsieh, 2005).

Ethical Considerations

I completed the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics* in January 2015, and this research project was approved by the Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University.

One of the primary ethical concerns of this research was the cross-cultural component and resulting power differentials. Due to the history of colonialism in Ghana and other developing nations and the implications of colonialism present in volunteer tourism, I maintained a constant awareness of the power dynamics in the relationship between myself as the researcher and the community members as the interviewees. Grace introduced me to community leaders in Kurotia where I was able to explain my research project and gain their blessing to complete my research in their community. As I have used an anti-colonial discursive framework, it was important for me to gain acceptance into the community; instead of an imposition into a cultural space that was not my own, I felt welcomed and accepted. Given the power I have as a white, educated woman from a developed country, I felt that being introduced to the community in this way allowed me to be as unimposing as possible.

Within the framework of this research, power must belong to the community members, meaning that each individual will speak to what they feel is personally important, that they hold ownership of their stories at all times, and that they know they are free to remove themselves and their stories from the research relationship at any time. It was important to me that all participants felt that their narratives are their own and that they have control over its use in the research. Each individual was able to decide whether or not they wanted their quotations to be used within these research; of the nine participants, two have chosen to not have direct quotations used. Throughout the research process I have made an effort to maintain reflexivity in the

analysis and discussion of the findings in order to ensure that the findings reflect the experiences of the participants.

Another important ethical consideration that arose from my sample was that some of the participants were connected to or benefited from volunteer tourism. Because there have been a number of volunteer tourism projects within Kurotia, many people have either directly or indirectly benefited from volunteer tourism; this could skew the results. I recognize that participants who had been involved with volunteer tourism may have felt the need to give a positive impression of their experience, which may not have reflected their true experiences. Efforts to mitigate this included probing further into participants' experiences in order to gain a better understanding of where their opinions and views were coming from.

Limitations of this Research Project

One of the primary limitations of this research was time constraints due to the nature of the Masters of Social Work program. I had two months to complete the recruitment and interviews of participants in an unfamiliar environment. I had to unexpectedly leave Ghana early due to a number of personal and familial issues, which made an already short timeline shorter than I had anticipated.

While English is spoken by many people in Ghana, the language barrier was another limitation in recruiting participants. Due to time and financial constraints, I was unable to recruit a translator; this means that over the course of the research, I was limited to participants who were able to communicate in English. Having used a translator would have granted me a more diverse pool of participants.

With more time, I would have liked to complete more interviews with a more diverse sample of participants; of the nine participants I interviewed, seven were men, and the two women I did interview did not want their quotations published in the final report. This lack of diversity in my sample has the potential to increase sample bias, meaning that the conclusions of my research may also be biased. Because I did not have equal gender representation throughout this project, the unique experiences and opinions that women have to offer were not included and, as such, enlightening juxtapositions and comparisons may have been missed. In future research, it will be important for me to actively focus on achieving a more balanced sample. Because I was relying on the help of the community and snowball sampling, I should have made it clear that I was looking for both women and men to interview.

Sample bias may also be present in the fact that some of the participants have benefitted directly from volunteer tourism; similarly, two of the participants had direct contact with volunteer tourism organizations (the local orphanage and World Vision). In both of these cases, the personal situations of the participants may make them more likely to voice position opinions of volunteer tourism. In order to mitigate this bias, I made an attempt to create rapport with the individual participants. I was introduced to the community by Grace, who is well-respected and who had also done her own research related to international development organizations. Due to the way that I was introduced, I feel that rapport was more easily built between myself and the participants. In addition, I would find myself talking to participants prior to the interview in order to get to know them and create a more personable and comfortable atmosphere. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) write:

rapport involves trust and a respect for the interviewee and the information he or she shares. It is also the means of establishing a safe and comfortable environment for

sharing the interviewee's personal experiences and attitudes as they actually occurred. It is through the connection of many 'truths' that interview research contributes to our knowledge of the meaning of the human experience.

Through building rapport with the participants, I feel as though the truths of their experiences were able to come to light and that they do in fact contribute meaningfully to this research project. While bias cannot be entirely mitigated, I believe that the rapport I built with the participants was helpful in mitigating as much bias as possible.

Chapter 4: Findings

“I think they are, they are wonderful interventions. Yeah. I feel good and I am happy that we have organizations like this to help where we cannot.” - I.F.

In this chapter I will examine the findings resulting from reading, re-reading, and analysis of the interviews. Using conventional content analysis, where the goal is to draw out themes and categories from the interview data, I was able to identify five broad themes. The first is “volunteer tourism in the community”, wherein participants identified the kinds of volunteer projects either taking place or that have taken place in Kurotia and outlying communities and their importance in filling gaps that have been left by the government. Second is the theme of “who comes to volunteer?”. From the perspective of members within Kurotia, who are the volunteers? What do they perceive to be the motivating factors in people coming to volunteer in Ghana? What qualities, if any, make an “ideal” volunteer? The third theme I identified was “overwhelmingly positive personal experiences”; in this section I will offer the narratives shared by participants in terms of their own personal experiences with volunteers and volunteer tourism. The fourth and fifth themes are tangentially related; the fourth theme covers the challenges of volunteer tourism as perceived by the participants and, following this, the final theme highlights recommendations and areas of improvement. The figure below illustrates the above themes and their corresponding sub-categories, which operates as the organizational structure for this chapter.

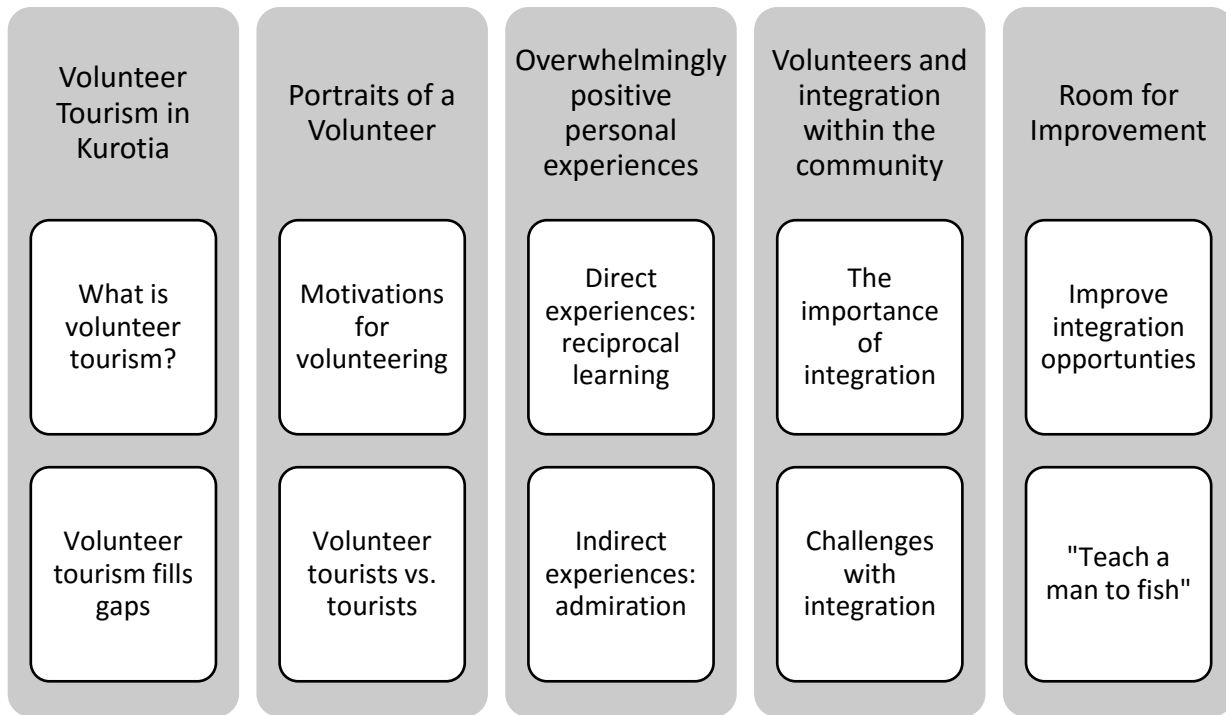


Figure 2: Themes and sub-categories

THEME 1: Volunteer Tourism in Kurotia

In order to ground the content, each interview began with a question about volunteer tourism as a broad concept: “can you tell me a bit about your current view and understanding of volunteer tourism?”. In defining volunteer tourism, S.M. identified a number of important points:

Volunteer tourism is something that the white man from Canada, or England, or different countries come to Africa to help the rural communities to know much about them and just help them in some activities. [Volunteers] do come to participate, help [communities] to develop and help them to do some good, some school for them. And making nice, volunteer to do anything to them, just to make them comfortable.

Significantly, the first identifier S.M. used to describe the volunteer tourist was race, followed by two countries – the second (England) having been Ghana’s colonizer. From this perspective, volunteerism and development is something that happens outside of Ghanaians; progress occurs

when privileged individuals from developed countries come to countries like Ghana to implement the proper steps to development.

I.F. shared a similar sentiment as S.M.: “that the person coming into the country or the community is going to partake in something that will be of benefit to the community that the person is visiting”. In the case of volunteer tourism, then, the goal is for individuals and organizations from developed countries to affect positive change in developing communities through volunteerism.



Figure 3: International organizations mentioned by participants

using the above examples, S.M. used words such as “help” and “do good”, while I.F. used “partake” to describe the actions taken by volunteers. According to F.A., to be a volunteer is to “allow yourself to give up everything you can to help some other people. To help some people, especially in terms of supporting”. In support of this, S.M. stated: “we get those volunteers in Ghana and the organizations, the international organizations, they try to at least help the rural communities to improving their living standard”.

From previous studies, however, it is difficult to know how much positive, lasting change is done by volunteers in the community; dependency, the short length of a volunteer’s stay, the lack of language skills and qualifications, and experience all become a burden that the community must carry. While volunteering is seen as “helping” by local community members, the harm that they may doing is difficult to measure and potentially impossible to see.

In comments such as these, the kind of relationship that volunteer tourism embodies is revealed. Volunteer tourism was consistently characterized by participants as a “very, very positive” thing that comes from people and organizations outside of the community and, often, from outside of the country. Although nearly all participants identified the role of a volunteer as one of help and support, it is the volunteers and the organizations that are seen to be the experts for change within the community. Community collaboration seemed to be implied in participants’ use of words like “help” and “support”, however it was unclear where that collaboration comes into play based on these initial thoughts from participants.

Simply due to their country of origins, volunteers are considered to be authorities on development. This speaks to the damage done by colonialism in countries such as Ghana, where, due to the colonial mindset, it is common to experience things from developing countries as positive, good, and progressive. Volunteer tourism, an industry that has arisen out of a desire for individuals from developed countries to “help” alleviate poverty in a more hands-on way, is perceived as positive not only due to the immediate positive effects that a community may experience, but due to the perception that everything Western is better; although volunteers are often not “experts”, they are seen as such due to the colonial mindset which “encompasses [the] subservient attitudes towards the colonial ruler as well as [the] predisposition towards aping Western ways” (Constantino, 1978, p. 277).

Bridging the Gaps

Many participants acknowledged the importance of volunteer tourism in the Kurotia community in terms of it filling gaps that were not being filled by local peoples, organizations, or governments. J.H. elaborated on this idea:

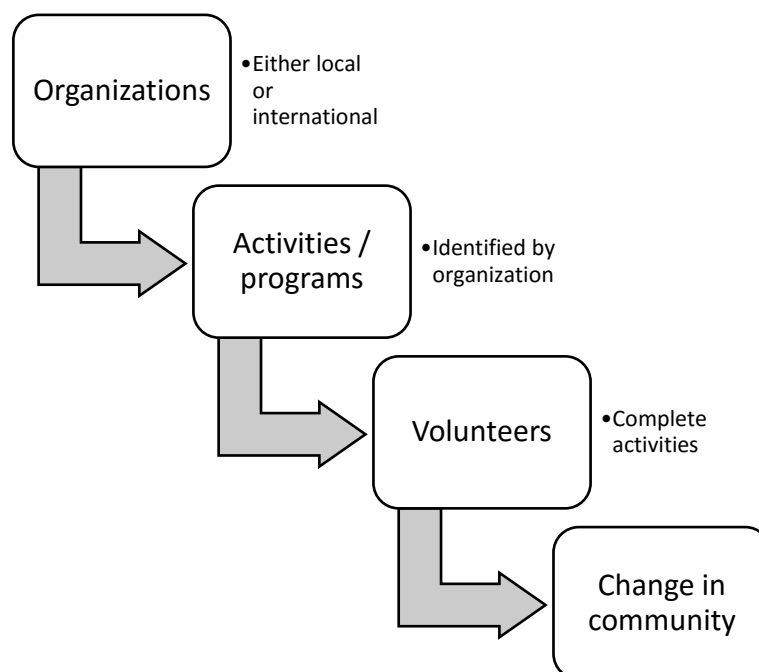


Figure 4: Initial characterizations of volunteer tourism

They [the volunteers] are filling a gap. Often made by the government. Because maybe our, our... the demands that we want and the technology that we have is not all that there. And they have specialized people who are specialized in that particular place, or in that particular field. And if they, if other people can come, they are coming to help.

Another participant, D.H., verbalized a similar sentiment: “those institutions that may lack expertise in one area or the other ... they may bring these volunteers to bridge certain gaps at certain points”. Due to a lack of expertise, a lack of technology, or a lack of specialized personnel, volunteers are brought in to fill gaps that participants see as unable to be filled by Ghanaians.

D.H. was also able to identify an additional gap in another area of relevance; many professionals, such as teachers, prefer to stay in large cities such as Accra, leaving smaller rural communities without those professionals:

Where Ghanaians don't go, they [volunteers] are willing to go. And those are the people who must be served because all those in Accra and the big cities, normally they have the best, the best facilities are there. So it's the rural areas where it needs the help most. Unfortunately the indigenous people don't go because of the provisions. And these foreigners want to go!

In this way, volunteer tourism is considered to be not only positive, but necessary by participants.

It is important to consider, however, how these gaps in service delivery were produced. The developing world has played a large role in creating and maintaining these gaps through years of loans and grants, and through donor-sponsored programs such as the Heavily-Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative developed by the World Bank and IMF, the US-sponsored Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) (P. Lewis, 2012) These programs have necessitated economically prudent policies and have shaped Ghana's economic and social policy choices, leading to gaps in social provisions.

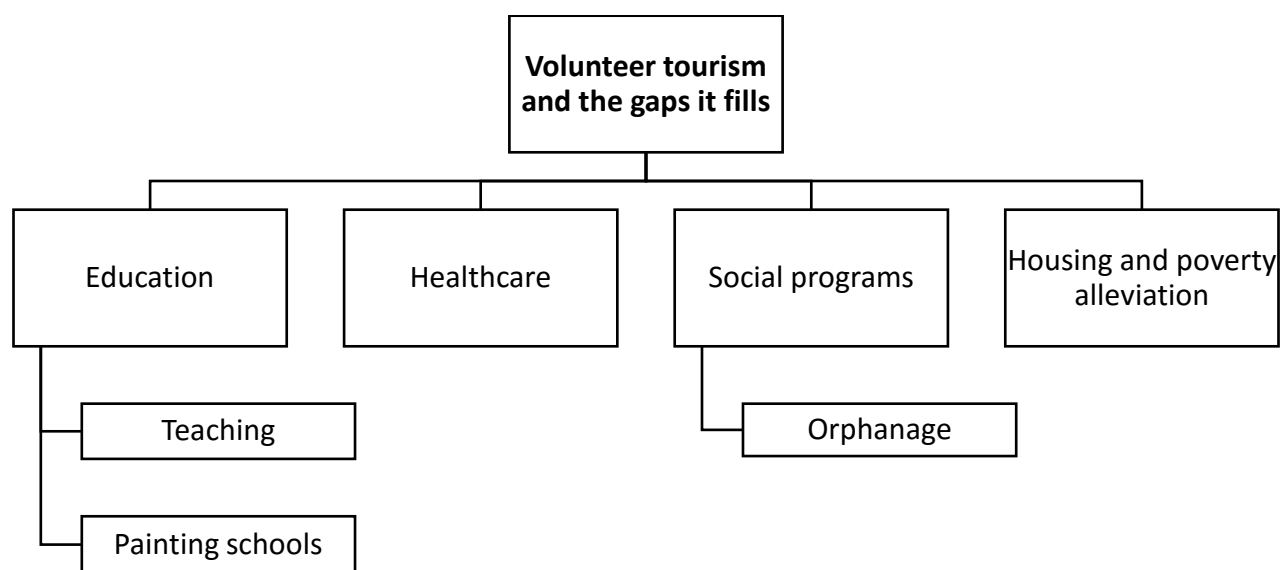


Figure 5: Volunteer tourism filling gaps

Education. The education sector was identified by participants as one of the primary areas where volunteer tourism takes place in Ghana. D.H. pointed this out:

It's more often than not the education sector that brings them to the country. Well let me say that they'd rather come and join the education sector. I'm not too sure that the, the, the education sector brings them. I know more often than not they come and then they go right to that sector -- Because of lack of expertise and inadequacy in all areas in that sector.

Later, he addressed the need for teachers more in depth:

And with the education system normally in Ghana here, especially in science, we don't have too many science teachers. Therefore once in a while, normally, we really need science teachers.

The need for teachers in specific subject areas is further compounded by the lack of Ghanaians willing to go into the rural areas:

When they go to the villages, for instance, the education sector, the teachers more often than not wholly are Ghanaians, but they finished college and they don't want to go to such conditions, deprived conditions. Lack of water, lack of electricity, etcetera. They primarily want to be in Accra, in the cities, and enjoy life. So volunteers come and they want to go and serve, and bridge the gap.

Teaching is not only done by volunteers in the formal teaching environment of a school, but can be done outside of the classroom. S.M. spoke about his experiences with volunteers in his community who would

teach how to do some certain things, crafts. These kind of, teaching the children. Using computer. They teach them, they will teach how to do something for yourself. Yes.

Teaching you the computer, teach how to do some artwork. They sit with you and teach you. At the end of the day you get something out.

This characterization of teaching is much more informal, yet it is still focused on building community knowledge and skill development. As S.M said, “at the end of the day,” community members learn and grow through having volunteers come into the community to teach.

In addition to teaching, I have also included the maintenance and caretaking of school buildings in this theme of “education”. Three participants discussed a volunteer tourism project where individuals came with an international organization to paint an elementary school. I.F. explained that there was an elementary school, sponsored by World Vision, built in the community; afterwards, he said, “we had some volunteer tourists coming in to decorate the building with, you know, the alphabet and this learning materials for the children”. D.H. touched on the importance of the project to the community:

They came with the premise, they came to paint the place - oh, a school. You know, children learn by seeing more, and touching. So they came to draw a whole lot of things for the children to actually have the feel of what banana is, what the dog is. The volunteers were always around there for the children to see, and when they go they see a dog and they see "dog" written there.

S.M. agreed: “Elephants, cars, and they paint it. They make it, the alphabet, elephant, letters, zebras. ... The children will look on it and use it to learn”. The temporal reach of having these volunteers in the education in sector went farther than simply teaching for a limited time; the volunteers were able to spend time with the children in addition to leaving a permanent learning tool for the community in the form of the paintings on the school.

Healthcare. Unlike others areas of volunteer tourism discussed by participants, the healthcare sector was only mentioned in passing. Two participants identified foreign volunteers in the healthcare sector, including doctors and nurses, mostly from Cuba. In our interview, D.H. disclosed: “we also have the health sector, which always - almost always - need doctors”. This was especially true in 2015, J.H. explained, due to the doctor strike in Ghana: “I know that Cuba has been sending some groups of people to Ghana, volunteers to Ghana. They are doctors and nurses and all that ... [their] government assisted us because our doctors were on strike”. This was the only sector where participants identified a foreign government being involved in filling gaps in Ghana by sending volunteers directly.

Social programs – orphanage. Within Kurotia there is a locally-run orphanage that provides for the needs to orphaned children. This orphanage was consistently mentioned by nearly all participants as one of the primary sources of foreign volunteers in the community. A.K. was the first participant – the second interview – to bring my attention to the orphanage: “we have an orphanage just close by in my community. ... Yes. And they [the volunteers] live with the children in the house. They do everything with them in the house”.

J.H. discussed the role of the volunteers in more depth:

I've realized that they are all pretty, they are nice people, they are timid, very decent people, and I, we, love seeing them. We love seeing them with the children. Which we, the locals, have not been doing. We have been seeing them playing, playing with them, carrying them, and all that.

Again, J.H. depicts volunteers as filling a gap that has not been filled on the local level – this time, taking care of the needs of the children in the orphanage.

Both H.H. and A.K. were able to go into more detail about the roles of the volunteers within the orphanage and the overall community.

I think they come to Ghana to come and help the orphanage here. ... Usually whenever they come, they are focusing on the orphanage home. ... They're taking the children, I see them every day. ... They sometimes educate the children, teaching, educate them. (H.H.).

They live with the children in the house. They do everything with them in the house. And they commute to town, make friends, talk to them. So I think in my community here, they are adding up to the children, but not really to the community itself (A.K.).

Participants confirmed that it is common to see volunteers from the orphanage in the community, however the general consensus was that while volunteers may be making a difference to the children at the orphanage, they offer little to the overall community as a whole.

Orphanages can be seen as arising out of circumstances created by the developed world. Due to a number of circumstances, including “Westernization, rural-urban labo[u]r migration, changes in the economy, formal education, and changes in home location” (Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015, p. 28), extended families have been finding themselves more and more incapable of caring for children who have become orphaned. In Ghanaian culture, there have been traditional means of caring for children who have lost their parents: an inheritance system and fosterage, where children are placed with relatives to be cared for.

This new style of caring for orphans was brought to Ghana with European missionaries, and has been sustained due to the Westernization of the country (Department of Social Welfare, 2008). Weakened family safety nets have resulted in an increased “potential of children ending up on their own, being a part of child-headed family, living on the street, being used for child

labor, or landing in orphanages” (Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015, p. 28). Orphanages – or Children’s Homes, as the Department of Social Welfare prefers to call them – have become so ubiquitous in Ghana that there is a movement to phase out Children’s Homes in favour of a more traditional foster-based structure of care (Department of Social Welfare, 2008).

These orphanages have been found to be poorly staffed and poorly equipped, with a lack of educational, health, and nutritional services (Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015). Significantly, many orphanages in Ghana are operating illegally (Department of Social Welfare, 2008). According to the Department of Social Welfare (2008), some of the social problems that plague Children’s Homes are:

- 1) Interventions are culturally inappropriate;
- 2) Homes limit contact with the larger community;
- 3) Homes do not develop or cultivate social networks within their communities;
- 4) Ethnic and religious identities become compromised;
- 5) Lack of consistency; and,
- 6) “Unmonitored Homes often veer from charity to commercial status. The truth of what goes on inside is never really known” (p.7).

Although there are strict policies in place for government-run Children’s Homes (including volunteer visitation), unlicensed homes such as the one in Kurotia are not obligated to follow those policies and, as the Department of Social Welfare highlights, often “veer from charity to commercial status”, simply operating to attract volunteers and donors.

Not only are orphanages such as the one in Kurotia operating illegally without being obliged to follow of the volunteer or other policies in places for Children’s Homes, there is evidence that volunteers do little to improve the life of the children:

evidence from an orphanage project in Ghana, however, points to a conclusion that underlying structures, power relations and financial interdependencies limit the impact of volunteers in the sustainable improvement of children's lives. In particular, volunteers lack the capacity as well as the financial resources to ensure sustainable community development (Rogerson & Slater, 2014, p. 487).

While the participants of this research have seen orphanage volunteers in the community with the children, there is an indication that they may not be contributing in any meaningful way to the orphanage or the children.

Housing and poverty alleviation. Participants identified World Vision and Habitat for Humanity as the primary providers for this sector of volunteer tourism. In addition to building schools in the community, S.M. noted that one of the principal goals of World Vision in the community was poverty alleviation through community development:

Anywhere there is World Vision, when they come to your community, you make sure to develop much of the community. ... So it's very nice. They come and they join some pipes and water to some communities, and some children who are very poor, they help them when they don't have house. They put house, they give you food, the sponsors will send them [money] and make sure they work on the project for you. So they [World Vision] just want to alleviate poverty in our system.

Another participant, A.K. had the opportunity to work with foreign volunteers through Habitat for Humanity a number of years ago when building houses for a poverty-stricken community.

This Habitat for Humanity, what I realized was that I realized that they came with the resources of funds. There was identified a community that is lacking accommodation. That is done through research by a party in this area, in this locality, basically. And information is forwarded to them, identify and agree on the terms that we have put forward. And then they come in with the money for us to use building the houses. We did

that and then they accepted it. When they came, what we provided was the men. The churches provided the men, and those who were supposed to benefit from the house were also provided. That means the community also provided the work labour. So whatever they brought us, the resources, we bought the cement, logs, whatever you can name it. So we worked all together. And then we started work. Everybody was on board. We go in and out, in and out, every day. To and from, to and from. The community is about 5 kilometers from a major town. So commute from the major town to the community every day, morning by 8:00 we are there, and we leave at 4:00. So, and we had spent one and a half months. That is closer to 42 days. They spent 42 days with us. And we built houses; close to about 80 houses. ... We worked together with them as family.

A.K. cites this experience and the relationships he built with the volunteers as extremely positive. Unlike the initial characterization of volunteer tourism at the beginning of this section, this Habitat for Humanity experience not only involved community members in the decision-making process about the location of the houses, but involved them in the project itself.

THEME 2: Portraits of a Volunteer

The second theme identified in the interviews was the characterization of volunteers themselves. This includes the “average” volunteer seen around the community, their perceived motivations for volunteering, the differences between volunteer tourists and other tourists, and what, according to participants, would make an ideal volunteer in the community.

Participants were able to comment on the approximate ages, genders, and countries of origin for the volunteers that they have seen within their community. D.H. noted that “more often than not, [the volunteers] are young girls,” around the ages of “18, 19, 20”. S.M. shared the same observation, saying “they are young ladies, who are maybe from school, and they come around

and just volunteer and teach and help and do many things in Africa”. This coincides with feminist arguments that women are more likely to volunteer due to the fact that they are socialized to place greater emphasis on helping, caring, and relationship-building than men (Gilligan, 1993).

Having worked with Habitat for Humanity, A.K.’s experience with volunteers was slightly different:

They range in between the ages, as for the Habitat for Humanity, it cut across. Yes. You have from, we had from 18 to 50-something years old who came around. Yes. Yeah, but with this volunteerism, it's basically academics. Those who come, they are on academic studies. ... Yeah, so the range is from 18 to close to 24, 25 years.

Although the volunteers he saw around the community matched the descriptions provided by D.H. and S.M., the Habitat for Humanity volunteers that A.K. worked with were from a slightly different demographic, with a broader range of ages and occupations:

Most of them were reverend ministers, some with technicians, some were architects, just name as you can – engineers, we had all of them around which was so much, uh, lovely. Younger female students made up most of the volunteers who teach and are at the local orphanage according to participants, however this demographic seemed to shift when looking at volunteers for Habitat for Humanity.

In addition, participants stated that, in their experience, most volunteers were from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Volunteer tourism was characterized as “something the white man” (S.M.) who “just want to come and serve mankind” (D.H.) participates in. In terms of characteristics, volunteers were said to be “hard working” and “friendly” (J.H.), “educated” (A.K. and J.H.), and are people who “have time” (F.A.).

Race and country of origin are integral to the construction of the volunteer tourist according to S.M. and other participants. Volunteer tourism is something created and perpetuated by “the white man” in developed nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and others. This characterization of volunteer tourists echoes back to the missionaries of the past, where Christianity was used as a tool to subjugate the indigenous populations of Africa. This marginalization took place in several ways, including the whitewashing of Jesus Christ, someone who is both historically and Biblically dark-skinned. The Jesus Christ presented by missionaries, however, was a light-skinned, blue-eyed man (Chengu, 2015) – becoming, seemingly, the first “White” Saviour.

There seems to be a racialization of “helping” in some of the narratives of volunteer tourism presented by participants. Helping is something that is done by “the white man”, something that is historically embedded in Ghana due to the country’s history of colonization. From missionaries to Ghana’s colonial masters, the idea that everything from the “white man” is positive and superior is still present today in the form of the colonial mentality. It is easy to think of the saviour mentality as belonging solely to white people, however it is not necessarily so. The myths of superiority and inferiority from colonization run deep, where whiteness has become “the universal ubiquitous subject of humanity” (Shome, 1996, p. 513).. Colonial mentality, the “unintentional attempt by Africans to continue to live and behave like [we] did during colonization, even several decades after [our] independence” (Nnam, 2007, p. vii), leads to shame about culture, customs, and traditions, while seeing everything African as inferior to everything from the developed world. It only follows, then, that the help of those who are white is considered to be superior.

Motivations of Volunteers

A number of motivations that volunteers are perceived to have in coming to Ghana were discussed by participants throughout the interviews. The motivations for volunteering that were identified by participants seem to fall into three broad categories: perceived personality traits, the desire to make a change, and outside attributes attributed to the volunteers. In addition, money was explicitly mentioned as not a motivation for foreigners offering their service to the community.

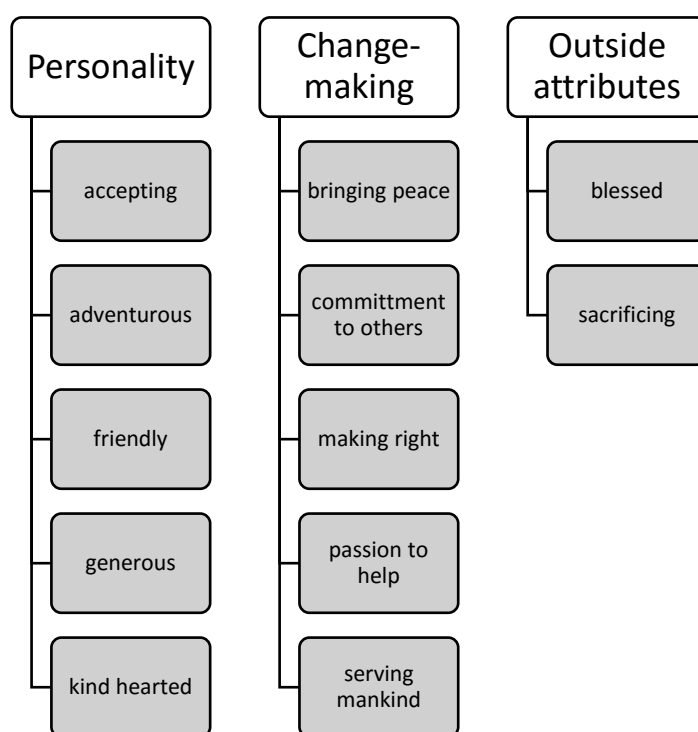


Figure 6: Perceived motivations of volunteers

Volunteers were perceived by the community members to have a large number of positive personality traits that support their motivation for volunteering abroad, and much of the language used by participants seemed to be religious in nature. In our interview together, D.H. stated that it was “kind-hearted foreigners” who would come to Ghana and volunteer, driven in part by “their adventurism. ... They're going to Africa. They know that the provisions [aren't]

there, they know what is in that area”. Volunteers were characterized as coming to Ghana in spite of the difficulties of living in a developing country. F.A. supported this idea: “I think them accepting and committing. There is not cleaning, there is not toilet, but as they come they try to do good things”.

I.F. gladly expressed his feelings about the motivations of volunteers:

Oh! Most of them are friendly people. Because it's like they know what they are coming to do and have decided to do it before they embark. Because sometimes you see them carrying children to the hospital, they don't mind. The dresses they are wearing, they just cuddle. They don't discriminate, those I have seen here. They don't discriminate.

Volunteers were broadly admired by participants, including I.F. and two other participants who asked not to be quoted, for their willingness to do what needed to be done in any situation.

These positive personality traits, when combined with a desire to create change in the world, were perceived as engrained in volunteers to the area. I.F. continued:

I'm thinking, if you're coming to Africa or the third world as it's sometimes called, I believe they ... are people who have a passion to help less privileged people. People who think they have more than enough, and they come maybe give some to other people.

S.M. explained the generosity he saw in the volunteers: “they always want to help the needy. They always want to improve the lifestyle, the living standard of the people that aren't privileged”. Volunteers to Ghana were considered by participants to be generous and truly in Ghana to offer their services to others, as F.A. called attention to in talking about volunteers:

They are good. Good, very good. Because out of the day you will see that they come to volunteer. It's not that they come for their business, they truly come for us. They have to

wake up early and to see the kids, the orphans. They will stay here, teach them. So they truly come to volunteer.

All participants recognized that volunteers were not paid for the work they did in Ghana, which seemed to add to their positivity in characterizing the volunteers.

Sacrifice is consistently attributed to the volunteers by participants, best summed up by D.H.'s perspective:

We can say, America, by all standards, is better than Ghana. Someone leaves America and comes to Ghana with all the inequality that we have, all in the name of serving.

Somebody leaves somewhere and doesn't know whether you'll be killed, whether you'll be loved, whether you'll be accepted. You just want to come and serve mankind.

From this point of view, volunteers embark on an experience where they do not know what will happen to them; they are going to a mysterious, unfamiliar, and possibly dangerous location where they sacrifice the consistency that their life back home has to offer in order to serve. "Volunteerism," I.F. added, "is like sacrifice, and sacrifice is not an easy thing. So they are blessed people. That's what I think. They are blessed people".

Words such as "blessed", "sacrificing", "serving mankind", "bringing peace", "passion to help", and "commitment to others" evoke strong religious imagery, which is not surprising as Christianity is deeply embedded into Ghanaian culture. It is important, however, to remember that Christianity was one of the primary "civilizing" instruments used by colonizing powers in Africa. Edward Andrews (2009) wrote "missionaries were thus visible saints, exemplars of ideal piety in a sea of persistent savagery" (p. 663); there was little differentiation, he argued, between the "missionary-as-saint and missionary-as-imperialist" (p. 665). The volunteer tourists of today can be compared to the missionaries of the past. Although their goals, according to participants

in this research, are largely positive, there is a long history in Africa of “helping” being used as a tool to subjugate, exploit, and control (Andrews, 2009; Chengu, 2015), as the line between “saint” and “imperialist” is not only thin, but arguably non-existent.

In this way, volunteer tourism can be seen as a form of modern-day colonization; like the missionaries who came to Africa to “civilize” the “savage” indigenous population through the promotion of Christianity and the creation of social services that did not complement traditional beliefs, the volunteer tourism industry seems to lack the insight needed to avoid repeating the colonialist past. Because Christianity is historically entwined with the growth of capitalism and Westernization and, as such, the exploitation of Africa’s human and natural resources, it is interesting that religious themes are used to describe these volunteer tourists. These themes point to an earlier imperialism that asserted white dominance and divine salvation, while simultaneously erasing traditional cultures and beliefs.

Volunteer Tourism and Tourism

Four of the participants had the opportunity to discuss their views about the primary differences between someone who comes to Ghana for tourism versus someone who intends to be a volunteer. Of people who visit Ghana, J.H. pointed out that many of those come for business: “though they are tourists. But they are here to do business. And those have been assigned to do a particular job in Ghana, they say, they see to whatever they are here to do”. Their focus, then, is on their business goals and tourism, as opposed to volunteering. However, F.A. noted that people in Ghana on business do sometimes volunteer as well: “whenever they can do something for the NGO, and then [the] NGO sends them, maybe they will take it. They will not give all. The business is full time, volunteering part time”. Although foreign business

people may spend some time volunteering with NGOs, their primary concern is on business as opposed to the volunteerism.

S.M. also shared his views on the difference between volunteer tourism and “traditional” tourism:

Yeah, there's difference. Volunteers normally come not to be paid, we will not pay them. So they come, and they do that, and after they do that, they go back. When you come for maybe tourism and these things, that one you need something sometimes in return. But these people come, just do the things and help the community and they go. There is much difference.

The generosity and selflessness of volunteers is again in the forefront of this characterization; while tourists visit countries to get “something sometimes in return” – whether that be stories, souvenirs, or experiences – the sole concern of volunteers is perceived to be helping the community. Significantly, it seems as though money would “corrupt” these good intentions, where the lack of an economic benefit to volunteers is integral in the construction of volunteer tourism by the participants. It seems as though a financial incentive would tarnish the sacrificial nature of volunteering.

A similar sentiment was shared by I.F.:

The normal one, the other type of tourists, maybe he's coming in his own capacity and coming to do things to benefit he or herself. But in case of volunteer tourism, as I understand it, maybe the person coming into the country or the community is going to partake in something that will be of benefit to the community that the person is visiting. Again, there is a difference in the perception of who benefits from each type of tourism; the “normal” tourism is seen as only benefiting the tourist, while volunteer tourism is understood as

benefiting the larger community. As F.A. said, the people are not different, but for the tourist, helping others is “out of their mind[s]”.

THEME 3: Overwhelmingly Positive Personal Experiences

Nearly each participant I interviewed was able to identify at least one positive experience they had with volunteers in the community. This coincided with a general difficulty in recounting any negative experiences with volunteers or organizations, or opinions on volunteer tourism itself. These experiences fell into one of two categories: either direct or indirect.

Direct Experiences: Reciprocal Learning

Three participants I interviewed had had the opportunity to either work directly with volunteers in completing a project – building houses with Habitat for Humanity, for example, be on the receiving end of services provided by volunteers, or had an experience with volunteers in the community outside of volunteer tourism projects. Participants cite these experiences as having a positive effect in both their lives and further informing their opinions on volunteer tourism as an industry. Reciprocal learning was the primary theme linking these narratives together.

A.K. was the only volunteer who worked in alongside volunteer tourists on a project in the community. As the minister of a local church at the time, A.K. considers his time with Habitat for Humanity as a unique learning experience that was influential on how he relates to others.

How [the foreign volunteers] relate[d] to each other was so much good. We learnt a lot from it. In common to us, we have learnt some major things from them as Ghanaians. In our culture, we have a high respect for elderly persons ... we always, um, agree to acknowledge such persons. For instance if somebody is a doctor or reverend minister, we

always want to call them by adding the necessary title that is attached to it. But in terms of having the volunteers, we realized that they only mentioned them by their first names! ... They never used any other names. If you were called Michael, you were Michael. If you are James, you are James. If you are Thomas, you are Thomas. It's, it's wow. I tried to ascertain as to why that happens. ... And the answer was that if you should call somebody just by their first name, going ahead you relate to the person closely, one. And two, uh, when you are working ... everybody participates in whatever sort of work you are doing.

A.K. continued:

In [the] course of work we realized that if you are a mason, you do the work as mason. If you came into help without any professional background, you are still carrying the blocks. Yes. If you are, if you are mixing the concrete. And that has made me realize that calling people by their first names really has some power behind it. It has impacted something very good in us. Even based on that I have named my child after one of them. ... He was called Jim, yes. ... Yeah, one of them who came was a Jim and he was a very close friend of mine. We moved together, and everything, go up and down. So we he became a very good friend. ... And I gave that to my first born boy. I just gave the name to him, Jim.

I feel as though this passage from our interview is the best indication of the effect that volunteer tourists can have on a community. Not only were they able to build eighty houses with Habitat for Humanity, the volunteers and Ghanaians working on the project were able to learn from each other and significantly affect the lives of one another in a positive way.

In his experience with a foreign nurse who volunteered in a hospital in his hometown, J.H. cites learning as one of the primary ways that he personally has benefited from volunteers:

Learning is an everyday process. No matter how you are, in terms of age, ethnicity, every day is a learning process. So if you allow yourself to learn, I think you can learn anything. You can be productive to your own self and beneficial to society. So every day when they come, as I said earlier, we learn from them and they also learn from us. So when two parties are sharing ideas from each other, the idea that learning is good.

Reciprocity and mutuality were the principal characteristics of his relationship with the nurse in his hometown; not only did she offer her time and skills to enrich the community, J.H. felt that the nurse was similarly enriched by her own experience.

Similarly, having being taught how to use a computer by a friendly volunteer, S.M. shared with me his appreciation:

They are just always lovely, always want you to do something for yourself. When you are with them, today, you don't know how to paint, they will teach you how to paint. You just meet, and if you don't know how to do something, they will make a program to teach you how to do things. Like computers, use a keyboard, a mouse. How to log in, how to open a computer. They'll be teaching you. So you'll be doing something.

Like with the two other participants with direct experience, S.M. discussed his appreciation of the reciprocal learning process he experienced:

When people come, we learn from them, they also learn from us. So that is why most of the people want to come to Ghana. Also to know much about Ghana, also to learn about Ghana whilst Ghana can learn.

The reciprocal learning process is integral to these stories. While these three individuals had different experiences with volunteer tourists, what links together their narratives is the learning that took place not only from volunteer to Ghanaian, but also from Ghanaian to volunteer. We must be critical of this reciprocal transaction, however. While on the surface this reciprocal relationship seems equitable, it is important to consider the power differentials between volunteer and host community member. The colonial mentality present in previously colonized countries like Ghana make the relationship between local peoples and individuals from developing countries inherently unequal. Similarly, the goal of “helping” presented by many volunteer tourists echoes back to the history of missionaries as being a colonizing force in Ghana and other similar countries. The individual from the developed world has an inherent privilege in this relationship that seems to go unrecognized by either volunteer or host community.

As volunteer tourism tends to follow the development approach, volunteer tourism organizations and volunteers alike seem to ignore the historical circumstances that have created the inequality and poverty in countries like Ghana. This approach points to underdevelopment as a result of individual shortcomings and, as such, development can be achieved by following the examples of already developed countries. Individuals from these developed countries, then, provide the roadmaps to development for these underdeveloped communities, maintaining power *over* instead of the power *with* of the social justice approach. In this sense, it is impossible for the relationship of volunteer tourist and community member to be truly reciprocal; the relationship is inherently imbalanced in favour of the volunteer tourist.

Indirect Experiences: Admiration

Unlike the above direct experience, the theme linking together these narratives of indirect experiences with volunteer tourism is admiration for volunteers. Having not interacted directly

with volunteers these participants have seen the volunteers working in the community, filling gaps, and offered their admiration for the positive work being done. Secondary to admiration is the idea that volunteers in the community are not only helpful, but are almost necessary for moving forward.

Although he has never worked with volunteers directly, D.H. has worked with World Vision in various capacities around Ghana for over ten years. In discussing the importance of these volunteers in Ghana, D.H. started by saying “they really bring joy to people instead of bringing pain”. While recognizing the positive intentions of volunteers, D.H. continued:

As a Ghanaian, I'm appreciative. I see the adventure, I see the goodwill, I see the hearts to serve the world and humankind, etcetera, and I love to see them. For the love of coming to Africa, especially Ghana, to serve us. ... For me, they should come. For Ghana, they say that we are a middle income country, but I don't believe that. I don't believe that. We are where we are. For me I do not see much progress. So, you know, most of those people in advanced countries are saying ‘oh, Ghana is doing well. They have water, they have resources’ but things are not changing, so they shouldn't stop.

F.A. offered similar sentiments about volunteers in the community, saying that

volunteers are a good thing. Because they know there might be people who [don't] have anything, and they are acting to help, they are acting to support them. It's a good idea for them, and I think that they are good.

The volunteers are perceived to be working in the best interests of the community, which is further illustrated in this quote from A.K.:

I really feel fine that the foreign volunteers would come to our territory or our country to do a specific job. And if they are coming on a specific job to help the country, it is good.

It is a very laudable idea. ... Yes, it's very positive. Very, very positive. Very, very positive.

At the end of our interview, I.F. reminisced about an experience he had in a workshop related to volunteerism:

Well I think it's a good thing that we have volunteers in the world. I think, I don't have a very good memory, but I think at one of our workshops, at one of the workshops they put down the letters 'volunteers' and after each alphabet, they had some very nice meeting. So to me it's good that the 'word' even before the volunteers even physically coming into do the work, so it's a beautiful thing that there are volunteers.

In all of these experiences, the fact that volunteers have come to Ghana and offered their service seems to be of almost greater importance than the activities they are in Ghana to perform. The admiration for volunteers expressed by participants for simply being volunteers is evident in their words and their desire for volunteers to continue coming to Ghana. Again, this characterization of volunteer tourist speaks to the reality of the colonial mentality; development is perceived as something that comes from the developed world and is achieved due to the superior knowledge of individuals from outside of Africa. Development, it seems, cannot occur without the developed world. The locus of control is not internal, but external. Admiration for the volunteers, volunteer tourism, and the developed world is not only indicative of the colonial mentality, but risks devaluing of indigenous cultures, knowledge, and practices. The message of this kind of outside help is that traditional practices and resources are not enough to erase poverty and inequality; they are inherently inferior to the practices and resources of the developed world.

THEME 4: The Importance of and Challenges with Integration

In addition to doing the volunteer work they came to Ghana for, participants cite integration within the community as an important task that volunteers should aim to accomplish. Cultural learning, seen by participants as an indication of integration, is similarly important. According to participants, “cultural learning” included things such as learning the language, making an effort to learn about the community, participating in community events, wearing local dress, and making local friends. H.H. explained to me that culture “is part of being here. So whenever they are here, actually I think at least they should learn something about our culture”.

A.K. clarified the importance of integrating with the local culture, especially, he says, in a country that values community and togetherness:

When you look at the foreign culture, it is different from the culture we have here. We commit and greet you up on the way, but the foreign culture, you don't see it that way. Everybody's thinking about his business. Yes. But for me, as an indigene, we are a culture that if you see somebody, you should greet. You don't know either you may fall, just after passing by that person, without you greeting he or she may leave you. So we do it in the way to also attract respect for whoever you meet on the way and that makes it possible that even if you should hit your leg against something and you fall, that person will come back and save you. That is the reason why that when we meet anybody on the way, we say ‘good morning, afternoon, good evening’, we carry out all these things. But the foreign culture, you know it yourself, that you are not fond of that.

He continued:

I think with that, even if anybody's in town and there's a problem, that person could assist. We are caring people, so if you have a problem and you are a volunteer and you are within a community in Ghana, the best thing to do is have one or one with someone

who is very influential within the community. And you can know that by talking to somebody and that can open up the opportunity to see somebody who is very influential and you can talk to him or her. And that person may introduce you across the community.

F.A. expressed a similar sentiment: “if, as a volunteer, you come here, you don't know anybody or anything, there is nothing you have because you cannot do it by yourself”.

Integration is seen not only an opportunity for volunteers to get more closely acquainted with Ghanaian culture, but to make important connections in the community. Should something happen – falling or hurting their leg, for example – by knowing people in the community, help is always accessible. Should volunteers need any help, knowing local people would enable them to receive that help.

Participants recognized that many volunteers that they saw in the community made attempts to integrate. From learning the language, to wearing local clothing, to making friends, D.H. often saw foreign volunteers and members of the community together:

It's like they really want to associate and, and, and familiarize. So they are given names, and then they are happy to go around with them and all that. And it's like, it's a good sign that we are from two different races, we have somebody who comes and he wants to live like a Ghanaian. When they come, they want to wear our local fabric. And so that... and some of them even when they finish their one year, they want to stay on because of their association here.

When volunteers are able to integrate into the community, they are better able to understand Ghanaian culture and create strong ties to the work that they are doing and the people they are helping; understanding the context of the volunteer work by understanding the community was perceived to be just as important as the work itself.

Barriers to Integration

Participants identified a number of barriers to integration that volunteers to the community may face. The two participants who discuss these barriers included cultural barriers – including language learning, and barriers created by the community or volunteer organization. It is important to reiterate the apparent importance placed on community integration by the participants, as volunteers who are closely connected to the community were perceived as more understanding, better equipped to understand the local context, and as more supported.

A.K. spoke about the barriers he saw the volunteers face in the community, including a lack of warmth from the community:

Sometimes the approach to the volunteers from the community is a problem. ... Because of the language barrier, sometimes it's a lot of factors. And also perceivedness. ... Yes, so 'I can't communicate well with this person, how do I get closer?' So it's a whole lot, but if they are some few of them who have courage. ... In a way, I don't know if it is by their culture, they ... don't greet. Some of them when you greet, they respond. Some others will maybe just go about their business. Their friendship in the community, it is not as you might be thinking that it should be.

This demonstrates that not only can it be difficult for volunteers to approach members of the community, it can also be difficult for members of the community to approach the volunteers in order to make a connection. In my own experience as a foreigner in Ghana, the difference in the culture around greeting can be difficult to get accustomed to and not greeting can make foreigners seem cold, distant, and uninterested – not a person that invites an approach.

Two participants, A.K. and H.H. pointed to the local orphanage, where foreign volunteers were common, as a barrier to their integration. According to A.K., the volunteers are not often outside of the orphanage and able to integrate with the community: “they [orphanage employees] always drive them [volunteers] to the house, and you see them moving out of the house to town and back”. The reason for this became clear to me during my interview with H.H.:

Whenever they are passing, even when you say 'hi', they don't. ... I learned they [the orphanage] were, I learned they informed them [the volunteers] about we the people in the community, that they should be careful about us. Some of us are bad, we could harm them. But it isn't true. ... Whenever they see us, some of us are good to them. I used to work for [the orphanage], so they now realize what they've been told is never true but at least, at least when you get to know them, you know they kind of, they know they kind of are wrong.

As a tradesman who was often hired by the orphanage to do work, H.H. was often in close contact with the employees and volunteers. When asked how it feels to hear that this is what the orphanage was saying about the local community, H.H. explained:

Yeah, it feels bad. It feels bad. Because the reason why I feel bad is whenever they need help, they call me. So when they say such things to them, whenever you call me, you think of how they see me.

At times having working closely with the orphanage, H.H. referenced his feelings a number of times throughout the interview. On one hand he was able to demonstrate to volunteers that the orphanage was incorrect about the community, but on the other he was acutely aware of what was being said about the community and, as such, about him. Significantly, H.H.'s narrative speaks to one of the primary issues with orphanages identified by the Ghana's Department of

Social Welfare (2008), that “children living in Homes do not develop social networks in their community”. If children do not have the opportunity to develop connections with the wider community while living in a Home, then it only follows that the volunteers who are caring for the children would have little opportunity to do so either. Although other participants were unable to speak to this experience, it is important to give weight to H.H.’s experience, especially in light of the significance participants give to the integration of volunteers in the community.

THEME 5: Room for Improvement

Improving Integration Opportunities

In the previous section, I highlighted the barriers to integration faced by volunteers that participants identified. As the integration of volunteers is seen to be of utmost important by the participants I interviewed, A.K. and F.A. were able to identify a number of options that would increase the integration opportunities that new volunteers have in coming into the community.

First, F.A. spoke about increasing organizational support for volunteers:

I'm thinking that it would be better if the volunteers come they should come to have better support. ... If, as a volunteer, you come here, you don't know anybody or anything, there is nothing you have because you cannot do it by yourself. So they, NGOs, have to connect to the community.

In part of bringing foreign volunteers to the community, F.A. argued that it is important for those organizations to introduce the volunteers to community members and to make sure that community support is available to them.

While volunteers have a responsibility to acquaint themselves with their new community, A.K. also believed that it was important for the community to create opportunities for that introduction to occur:

So in a nutshell, it is supposed to come from you to us, and we also to you. We can't just see you and then call you to come as a friend, but you see us, you come into the community, make a friend in the community by showing a warm heart.

As the orphanage was identified as the organization in the community that most regularly brings volunteers, he also gave two tangible solutions to this problem:

The orphanage would have to come out with a program that will help the volunteers interact with the community. For instance, if a group of Netherlands comes in, well out of their state for six months or three months, we can organize two separate community integration meetings with them. So they can go out to houses and then have a view of what is happening around. ... Yes. So you can know exactly what you have seen here, not knowing only the orphanage issues. But exactly what comes around and goes around.

In this case, the volunteers would be able to introduce themselves to the community, but also have the opportunity to better acquaint themselves with community resources and anything else happening around them. They would be able to develop a greater understanding of any social issues in the region, and could better appreciate the context in which the orphanage is operating.

As his second solution, A.K. suggested

a durbar [gathering] of community that will include them to interact. It could be a game for all of us, okay we have these days to play games with the orphanage. When I say orphanage it means that the volunteers are part of it. And the community will have to have that game with them to bring that relationship which might be lacking into them. Because if I should meet you today, tomorrow and I see you, I can easily approach you. But without having that first interaction with you, I would not even have a blink of an eye on you.

In all of the solutions recommended by F.A. and A.K., the community and the organizations have a shared obligation to aid volunteers in the integration process. While the volunteers should “make a friend in the community by showing a warm heart”, as A.K. said, the community should have the opportunity to show that same warm heart to the volunteers. The reciprocal process would not only help the volunteers integrate, but would also allow the community the opportunity to receive greater benefits through the presence of the volunteers. The onus, however, is not put on the volunteers to integrate themselves, but on the community to facilitate the integration of the volunteers. This deference to the perceived needs of the volunteers is another significant example of post-colonialism. Instead of focusing on the needs of the community upon the arrival of volunteers, the community is focused on the needs of the volunteers.

“Teach a Man to Fish”

Although the volunteer projects in this community were described as filling gaps, participants identified a number of still-existing gaps that they would like to see addressed. These gaps include needing more educated and prepared volunteers, a lack of work in the community, and the importance of skill-building and empowerment.

While volunteers that have come to the community are appreciated for their efforts by the community, J.H. touched on the importance of not only having volunteers come to Ghana, but having *skilled* volunteers: “if other developed countries will see that a developing country and will volunteer to send educated, learned people to our government, to institutions in Ghana, they can help. I think it will be better”. In terms of education, he said, “though we [have] some, [it is] not adequate”. Volunteers are respected in Ghana, however he highlighted the necessity of

having skilled volunteers in order to work in sectors – like education and healthcare – that require skilled workers.

Related to this gap is the employment gap identified by S.M.:

When [the volunteer organizations] finish with you, when they give you completed school and they leave you and you couldn't get a job, it is something. When they send you to the school and you finish, and you bring them the results, and they see that you get this, they should try and get you a job. ... And I think that one would be beneficial for our community. At least to get you the job. You'll be working and getting the daily job. It means you can help somebody. We can say then that we are developed. But with all my education, I didn't get a job, so instead I come still square zero. We need to get jobs and they should help the person get a reliable job. Maybe in the World Vision organization so that they can include in this lifestyle the children or the people who is supposed to help.

S.M. lived close to the school that was built by World Vision and painted by volunteers.

Although he is educated, having finished high school, S.M. – like many people in Ghana – was still unable to find a job. He reiterated the problem:

So even though someone like, an organization like World Vision is helping with education and helping with all of those things, it's still not helping with the issue of now jobs. ... Not helping with a job. There are no jobs.

Organizations such as World Vision in developing countries are often focused on education, which, as S.M. explained, is important for the development of the community. He argued, however, that without job opportunities, education means very little: “but if you get education and you don't get a job, still you are the same. You have so many papers,” but there is no work. He asks, “what will you do with your papers?”

He finished our interview with this:

They help raising the standard, the living standard, they help in sending people to school, they helping the brilliant but unfortunate children, but they should complete the job.

When you complete the school, you need to get a job.

S.M. made sure to clarify that he was not unhappy with the services provided to the community by organizations like World Vision, simply that he felt there was an important piece of the puzzle that was missing. What is important to consider, however, is that these are structural issues – they are not individual issues. As volunteer tourism generally does not take a social justice approach to poverty and inequality, the focus of interventions is on individuals; this lack of focus on macro issues such as the global economy, international developing, and a political environment that continues to keep developing countries impoverished, cannot lead to significant change in the structural issues plaguing towns like Kurotia.

Addressing structural issues requires an analysis that, as Farmer (2003) argues, is both historically deep and geographically broad. Any interventions that seek to make real social change in developing countries must acknowledge the historical, political, and geographical complexities that have created that poverty and oppression. Without this, issues such as the lack of jobs, will remain unaddressed by the volunteer tourism industry.

Like S.M., I.F. was sure to reiterate his appreciation of the presence of World Vision and similar organizations in the community prior to offering his opinion on what he believed could be done better in the community. In order to explain his point, I.F. used the old adage ‘*give a man a fish and he’ll eat for a day, but teach a man to fish and he’ll eat for a lifetime*’. Instead of focusing solely on physical development within the community, for example building schools and community centres, there should also be a focus on the people within the community: “I

think they should rather work up some enterprising spirit in them [community members] so that, I mean, we could be a little more... we should not be expecting much, but they should give us some skills”. While acknowledging that there should not be a reliance on these organizations and that many organizations are already stretched in terms of resources, I.F. emphasized the importance of capacity building within the community.

At the end of our interview, he excitedly exclaimed, “yeah, yeah! So that when they are not around, I can get my fish. Because donations, donations, donations, the sponsorship, the promises to finish, but if you're empowered... Oh! More empowerment! Skills”. While organizations are perceived as doing a lot of good within communities in Ghana, I.F. recognized that they may not always be in those communities – because, in fact, World Vision had pulled out of Kurotia a few years earlier. In order for people to be able to ‘get their fish’, as I.F. put it, he believes that skills and empowerment are integral to maintain a strong community.

The concept of “teach a man to fish”, however, is controversial when assessing volunteer tourism from a social justice perspective. The key to this kind of development is sustainability, which relies on an invocation for the poor to become independent and self-reliant. It puts the onus on individuals to take their own resources and energies in order to solve their own problems. Again, the stance of the development approach is that of blaming the victim; this neoliberal idea professes that poverty is due to individual shortcomings and the only way for poverty to be overcome is for the individual to use their own resources to rise above their circumstances. Instead of “teaching a man to fish”, a social justice approach is required in order for communities to grow and fight the systemic oppression that is the cause of the poverty and inequalities that they face.

Ultimately, what I.F., S.M., and J.H. would like to see in their community is a focus on fighting the structural inequality that is the core of the poverty and oppression that they experience. Education, healthcare, and buildings are important on the micro level, however, they argued, so are addressing the systemic changes that need to be made in order to fix structural problems – such as a lack of jobs – within the community.

Summary of Findings

This chapter discussed in depth the themes revealed within the interviews I completed with participants in Kurotia, Ghana. The participants highlighted the nature of volunteer tourism in Kurotia and surrounding communities, and characterized the kind of volunteers they typically see around town. Participants spoke to their experiences with volunteer tourism, both positive and negative; the challenges relating to volunteer tourism they saw within the community; and, finally, identified three areas for improvement in creating volunteer tourism opportunities that they feel would better reflect their needs and desires as a community. In order to maintain the anti-colonial focus of this project, findings were viewed through a lens that promoted social justice over development and addressed the global and historical factors in the oppressions that the people of Ghana face.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Using a conventional content analysis approach, the previous chapter went into detail about the findings from the nine interviews I completed over October and November of 2015 in the small city of Kurotia, outside of Accra, Ghana. This final chapter will discuss the findings of this research study by examining the research questions identified at the beginning of the study. By doing so, I hope to emphasize the importance of this research in creating socially just volunteer tourism in the developing world. Following this discussion, I will highlight the implications for social work in addition to offering recommendations for areas of future research.

Discussion

At the beginning of this study, I developed three questions that were used in order to guide the research:

- i. What are locals' experiences of volunteer tourism within their community?
- ii. How do locals perceive volunteer tourists and the organizations that bring them to the community?
- iii. How can volunteer tourism be improved within the community?

In this section I will discuss the findings of this project in relation to the above research questions, while also taking into account the previous literature on volunteer tourism, the anti-colonial framework, and relational-cultural theory.

1) What are Locals' Experiences of Volunteer Tourism within their Community?

The participants I interviewed for this research had largely positive experiences with volunteer tourism. These positive experiences included working alongside foreign volunteers to achieve a goal, having effective volunteers, and enjoyment from seeing the volunteers in the community.

One participant, however, had discovered that the local orphanage was warning new volunteers not to associate with the community, which negatively affected his view of himself, the community, and the orphanage as an organization. This is an excellent example of the Othering that can take place within the communities where volunteer tourism takes place, in conjunction with the role of neocolonialism in negatively affecting locals' self worth (Kothari, 2006; B. J. Lough & Carter-Black, 2015). Although H.H. had lived in the community for his entire life and knew it to be kind and welcoming, volunteers were made to believe the opposite by the orphanage, which in turn reduced any association they had with the people of the community in which they lived. Vodopivec & Jaffe (2011) argued that simply by being in a developing country and offering their help, volunteers tended to believe that they were reducing inequality; while the volunteers were in the community to help, by limiting association with the community outside the orphanage they were simply replicating the Othering narrative so commonly found in volunteer tourism experiences.

Volunteer tourism is often considered to be mutually beneficial to both volunteers and the communities due to the ability for volunteers to engage with communities in more authentic ways (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Wright, 2013), however the degree of mutuality in the experiences of these host community members is questionable. Both A.K. and H.H. noted that the volunteers at the local orphanage were often separated from the local community by being chaperoned by orphanage employees and by being warned about the dangers of the surrounding community. In cases like this, it is difficult to see where or when volunteers are able to engage with the community in an authentic and genuine manner; this leads to the question of whether or not volunteer tourism does in fact allow for more authentic engagement within a community and whether genuine helping relationships are formed.

Contrarily, other participants recognized that volunteers were, in fact, engaging with people outside of their volunteer organizations. For those individuals who had had direct contact with volunteers and volunteer sending organizations (VSAs), reciprocal learning was an important theme within their narratives; while the community learned and benefited from the work the volunteers had done, it was the perception of the participants that the volunteers had also learned and benefited from the experience. What this could imply is that different volunteer organizations offer different levels of engagement within the community in which those volunteer activities take place; it can seem disingenuous, then, to paint volunteer tourism as an industry that as a whole enables superior levels of community engagement than other tourism experiences.

What we can learn from the social justice approach, however, is that reciprocity and mutuality, while nice on the individual level, do not make volunteer tourism ethical. In order for volunteer tourism in Kurotia to be considering socially just, there would need to be some form of advocacy or change in the structures that maintain poverty. This is not to say that the participants are incorrect in saying that volunteer tourism has helped the community; it is possible – and likely – that some of the projects that volunteers have worked on (the school, for example) have positively benefited some members of the community. This change is simply at the individual, micro level; it does little to encourage lasting improvement for the community as a whole.

While volunteer tourism was seen as helping the community by participants, little can be said about the sustainability of their help or the ability of volunteer tourism to create legitimate social change. Change in Kurotia is kept at the micro level and while individuals may be better off and may have achieved progress in their lives, ultimately, the status quo of poverty and social inequality within the broader community has remained the same.

Volunteer tourism filling gaps. Although participants were largely positive in reciting their experiences of volunteer tourism, it is interesting reading the findings using the lens of the anti-colonial discursive framework. When volunteer tourism organizations bring volunteers into the community without consulting the community itself about their needs and desires, the focus is no longer on the community, but the organizations and the volunteers. Especially when it does not take the voices of local community members into account, volunteer tourism can easily be considered to be a new form of colonialism brought from developed countries to developing countries in order to offer pre-packaged, commodified solutions to complex and multi-faceted issues. In addition, volunteers who are not educated in the social and political histories of countries like Ghana will be unable to understand the poverty and inequality facing Ghanaian peoples as products of colonialism, and later, powerful financial world leaders. These individuals, however, are seen as experts on development by Ghanaians due to the colonized mindset that has arisen after years of colonization. Volunteers, as members of the privileged developed world, must work toward giving up their privilege and power in order to prioritize community needs which can only be done through education and reflexivity.

What participants see in Kurotia, however, is a volunteer tourism industry that seems to address gaps that are not being addressed by local community members or government. Due to having volunteers in the community, there is consistent help at the local orphanage, there are teachers in schools that are often left without, there is housing for people who had none, and there were doctors when Ghanaian doctors went on strike. Even though participants acknowledged the importance of these activities, many of the people I interviewed were able to identify an area of need within the community that had not ever been addressed locally by a

VSA; the lack of sustainable jobs – a systemic problem that cannot be fixed without knowledge, advocacy, or transformation in the structures of oppression.

The implication here is that VSAs seem to be able to adequately identify physical needs on the micro level within a community – housing, teachers and doctors, and orphanage workers, for example – but there are important needs that cannot be addressed without a firm understanding of systemic oppression, the history and implications of colonialism, and the goal of destabilizing the status quo. It seems, then, that volunteer tourism as it is continues to perpetuate colonialist ideals through the lack of engagement with the political and social realities of countries like Ghana and the complex factors that reproduce injustice; instead the volunteer projects and VSAs identified by participants within this study seem to take a shallow developmental approach to change within the community. The focus is on micro change instead of the macro shift required to positively transform the structures of oppression.

II) How do locals perceive volunteer tourists and the organizations that bring them to the community?

Within the existing literature on volunteer tourism, Guttentag (2009) provided an example volunteer tourism gone awry, wherein volunteers had painted the houses of local community members without their consent. The picture of the volunteers and organizations painted by participants in this study was significantly different than the one given in Guttentag's example. Even for those who had never personally met foreign volunteers, their presence was strongly felt to be positive within the community. In response to a question about volunteers, D.H. replied: "for me, they should come. ... Things are not changing, so they shouldn't stop". Words like "kind-hearted", "adventurous", and "friendly" were used to describe volunteers, and

the motivations for volunteering cited by participants were all positive and altruistic: “commitment to others”, “making right”, and “serving mankind”, for example.

These motivations as cited by participants have religious undertones that echo Africa’s history of Christian missionaries coming from Europe to “civilize” the continent. There is an underlying purity to the words used to describe volunteers, which have similarities with the meanings attributed to missionaries in colonial times. As Christianity was used as a tool of colonialism and imperialism, it seems as though volunteer tourism can be considered a new form of colonialism. Like the missionaries of the past, volunteers the developed world make their way to Africa in order to offer their “help” in fixing the problems that they see plaguing the continent. They may have little to no understanding of the issues or their complex histories, but they will regardless play the “expert” in international development and aid while unfairly earning the deference of the local community.

Not only is the “white saviour” trope present in the minds of individuals in the developed world, it is a mentality that is present in the minds of individuals in the post-colonial world. Since colonization, the colonial mentality has spread myths of the superiority of all things white while denouncing all things traditional and indigenous. Whiteness as “saviour” is a legacy of colonialism that still runs deep within the minds and hearts of Africans, devaluing their own histories, traditions, and resources and forcing them to rely on the “superior” developed world for development.

III) How can volunteer tourism be improved within the community?

In the literature, ethical volunteer tourism is characterized by reciprocity, respect, communication, and mutuality; this, however cannot be considered ethical from the social justice approach offered by Farmer (2003). Socially just volunteer tourism would require, at its core, a

focus on structural and systems change, combined with knowledge, advocacy, and transformation of the structures of oppression. Reciprocity and mutuality rely on the assumption that there is a level playing field between the volunteer tourists and host communities; it is individualistic and nearly post-racial, as it places the onus for development on the oppressed individuals instead of fighting the structural imbalances that have caused that oppression.

These concepts of mutuality and reciprocity erase the structural inequalities which remain part of Ghana's everyday reality and reproduce the myth that poverty and oppression is due to personal shortcomings. Mutual learning was something that was frequently discussed during participant interviews. As S.M. said, "when people come, we learn from them, they also learn from us". While this may be true on an individual level, it maintains the status quo of the colonial relationship between the developed world and the developing world. The locus for change is not internal to communities or countries, it is something that can only be achieved by external forces.

The social justice approach, however, forces us to consider the structural and systemic issues that are present in Ghana due to the history and legacies of colonialism. In order for volunteer tourism organizations to operate from a social justice approach, it would require working *with* individuals in order to create structural change. It would also necessitate giving up power and privilege while prioritizing the needs to the community. The fight for social justice must be led by those who are oppressed due to the fact that they are most familiar with the changes that must be made in order to ensure their equality. The role of privileged individuals, such as volunteer tourists, then, is that of an ally – to walk alongside the oppressed in *their* fight for justice.

By changing the way that volunteer tourism is characterized, from power-over to power-with, a connection beyond “helper and recipient” can be created, leading to a greater understanding between parties, a greater sense of self-sufficiency and self-worth within communities, and greater connections between volunteers, communities, and host community members. This concept of power is central to both the social justice approach as well as relational-cultural theory. Looking at power in this way would allow volunteer tourism to move away from individualism to social justice. It would enable volunteers to acknowledge their power and privilege and, subsequently, allow them to give up that power and privilege in order to walk alongside communities as change is transformed from the individual to the system as a whole.

Implications for Social Work

This research has important implications for social work – particularly in the field of international social work. According to the Canadian Association of Social Workers, “the profession of social work is uniquely founded on altruistic values respecting the inherent dignity of every individual and the obligation of societal systems to provide equitable structural resources for all their members” (2008). As such, when a social worker is examining phenomena such as volunteer tourism, it is not only important to describe the phenomena, but to deconstruct it. In this case, deconstructing the concept of volunteer tourism from a social work perspective has revealed the political, economic, and social factors that allow this kind of tourism to take place and thrive. Going into the community revealed the personal experiences and narratives of individuals, however it is important to place these experiences within the overall societal context. This enabled me to discuss the role of volunteer tourism in perpetuating inequalities within

communities, promoting harmful development ideologies, and maintaining the colonized mindsets of individuals in previously colonized countries.

CASW (2008) also notes that “each society, regardless of its form, should function to provide the maximum benefits for all of its members”, which is of particular relevance to this study. Volunteer tourism has come about due to the inability of countries to provide these benefits to all of their members; instead of the governments leading development initiatives, organizations have become the primary administrators of social change and development. It is important, then, for social work as a profession to be concerned with this industry. This research operates as a starting point to consider the role of social work in developing socially just volunteer initiatives while allowing researchers to maintain the focus on the overall social development of a community, city, or country.

When researching a social phenomenon, this research project highlights the important role that the social worker plays in advocating for change. A research project such as this is not simply a research project, it is a vehicle to begin the process of creating change – in this case, change in the way that volunteer tourism is perceived and the role of neoliberalism in creating a climate in which the volunteer tourism industry thrives. When advocating change, a social worker will work “a) In the best interest of the client, b) For the overall benefit of society, the environment and the global community” (CASW, 2008). Because research itself is a form of advocacy, it is important for social work researchers to ensure that their research is in the best interest of their clients (for my own research, the community of Kurotia) and beneficial to society, the environment, and the global community. This research points to the importance of maintaining that focus in order to develop meaningful projects that advocate for positive social change.

Similarly, this research highlights the necessity of social work education to offer an examination of macro concepts such as neoliberalism. These macro concepts have a significant influence on the structure of communities and the goals of government bodies, both of which can adversely or positively inform individual experience. Without a firm foundation, it may be difficult to understand some of the large-scale forces that affect countries, cities, communities, organizations, and individuals.

This is of particular importance when working internationally as a social worker, as the macro forces and the way they interact will be different. In order for the social worker to meaningfully advocate for change, they must have an understanding of the forces that are maintaining social injustice. When examining a phenomenon such as volunteer tourism, it is not enough to simply understand the concept of volunteer tourism, it is necessary to understand the forces *behind* the volunteer tourism industry – what is maintaining the industry, what circumstances have led to the industry, and what may be informing the experiences of host community members.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order to further an important goal of creating an ethically just volunteer tourism industry, more research needs to be done on the needs, opinions, and experiences of host community members. While my findings were largely positive, I was limited to one community in Ghana; these findings are not generalizable to all communities that are host to volunteer tourism activities, even in Ghana, due to the extreme difference in organizations, needs, and community make-up. It would be interesting to have the opportunity to do similar research in other communities in Ghana to see if the findings would be at all similar: would the results be as

positive as the ones in this research project? On an even larger scale, would the results differ in communities in other developing countries that are host to volunteer tourism projects?

For similar research done in the future, I would simultaneously conduct both in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups in order to gain an even greater understanding of host community perspectives on volunteer tourism. Similarly, a larger sample would allow for greater variance in viewpoints and experiences, as would more intentionally including the voices of women and young adults.

This research project enabled me to acquaint myself with a little-studied area within volunteer tourism literature, however I still have a number of unanswered questions that have the potential to guide future research:

- Is there a difference in the level of the community engagement of volunteers when the VSA is local as opposed to international? Does this affect the opinions that locals have about the organization or the volunteers?
- For locals in these communities, where would they like to see change come from? NGOs? The government?
- How do locals perceive their role in aid and development within the community?

Especially after gaining a better understanding of neo-colonialism and anti-colonialism, the third question is of great interest to me. With volunteer tourism, aid, and development as they currently are, do locals perceive themselves as having a place in the growth of their community, or is change seen as something that comes from *outside* of the community? In other words, where is the locus of control perceived to be by locals? Is it possible to have volunteer tourists come to a community while simultaneously building the capacity of the community to create change?

In conducting future research, I would be interested in not only hearing more from community members, but also local organizations that focus on creating positive social change. Ethnographic research on a local organization in Ghana would allow me as the researcher to gain a better understanding of the operation of a local aid and development organization – their goals, interactions with the community (that is, with other organizations and individuals), how needs are determined, who is involved in developing the programming of the organization, which indicators are used to quantify change, and many others. Ethnographic research would enable the researcher to engage with the organization in way that would garner meaningful information about the role of these local organizations in the development of their communities.

Take, for example, the organization at which I completed my MSW internship – the Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC) in Accra, Ghana. HRAC is “a not-for-profit, independent, non-partisan, research and advocacy organization set up to advance and protect human rights in Ghana” (Human Rights Advocacy Centre, 2016) that performs activities on the micro (legal counselling), mezzo (community development in the form of educational initiative in select schools), and macro (lobbying the government for change in social policies) levels. Completing an ethnographic research project would enable the researcher to better understand how an organization such as this determines the needs of the communities in which they operate and the activities and projects they will take on, while learning about how the organization perceives itself and its role in the development of the surrounding community and – if relevant – the country as a whole. HRAC, like many other NGOs in Ghana, takes on volunteers from around the world; using this method would enrich the existing research on volunteer tourism by learning about their perspective on volunteer tourism from the organization itself. Additionally,

ethnographic research would be useful in gaining and understanding of how the organization sees itself in relation to the government and their social policies.

In addition to ethnographic research, case studies would be another interesting and enlightening method in terms of volunteer tourism research. Like in the above proposed ethnographic research project, case studies would allow the researcher to compare and contrast a number of volunteer tourism organizations in order to gain a better understanding of their organizational structure, the needs they address, the reasons they may use international volunteers (and the pros and cons thereof), and many others possible research topics. Both ethnographic research and case study research would enhance the growing literature on volunteer tourism by gaining an in-depth understanding of how organizations see themselves in relation to the development of their communities and countries, as well as the role of volunteer tourists in achieving their organizational missions.

Conclusion: From Developmentalism to Social Justice

Using an anti-colonial discursive framework in conjunction with an expanded view of relational-cultural theory, I developed a qualitative research project with the bulk of the research to be completed in Kurotia, Ghana in the fall of 2015. I completed interviews with nine residents of Kurotia, a community that has had volunteers from a number of different organizations including Habitat for Humanity, the US Peace Corps, USAID, World Vision, Samaritan's Purse, and a local orphanage.

After completing these semi-structured interviews, I used conventional content analysis to analyze the data I collected; this analysis uncovered five primary themes:

- 1) Volunteer tourism in the community
- 2) Portraits of a volunteer

- 3) Overwhelmingly positive personal experiences
- 4) Volunteers and integration within the community
- 5) Room for improvement

The overall opinions and experiences of participants with volunteer tourism were positive, although many participants identified areas that could be improved in order to make volunteer tourism more effective and more ethical within the community. When examining these themes, it was important for me to keep in mind the colonial history of Ghana and the ways in which it could inform the experiences and narratives of the participants. In this way, I was able to gain a rich understanding of the volunteer tourism industry and seek ways in which to change the focus of the industry from individualistic to systemic – from developmentalism to social justice.

In this final chapter I discussed the findings of this research in relation to the three research questions I identified at the beginning of the study. In order to contextualize the findings, I took into consideration the previous literature on volunteer tourism as well as the theoretical frameworks used to construct this study.

Throughout this research, I have had the opportunity to get to know a small community in Ghana that has played host to a number of local and international volunteer tourism activities. While participants felt that the presence of volunteers in Kurotia was a positive phenomenon, the legacies of colonization are insidious and present throughout the narratives. By using this research to begin learning more about host community perspectives of volunteer tourism, it may be possible to create a volunteer tourism industry that better represents traditional values, that seeks to destabilize the systems that keep injustice in place, and that can create lasting, meaningful, systemic change.

Although there has been an increase in the amount of literature on volunteer tourism over the past few years, there still remains an important gap when considering the voices of individuals within the communities where volunteer tourism is located. Upon embarking on this project, it was my hope to offer a starting point that can be used to encourage further research to on the topic of social justice and volunteer tourism. While it is difficult to generalize the findings of this research, they point to a need to involve host community members in broadening the scope of research on socially just volunteer tourism.

Epilogue: Reflections on my Experience in Ghana

Stepping off the plane at Kotoka International Airport in Accra, Ghana, I immediately felt out of place. First of all, it was sweltering hot. I've never been opposed to hot weather, and, in fact, love summer more than any other season. This heat, however, was different. Knowing that my new house didn't have air conditioning made the weather stifling and unavoidable – unlike my home in Canada, or even Japan, where I could turn on the air conditioning the moment I walk in the door. Secondly, my difference was very obvious.

I am not unfamiliar with environments where I'm very obviously different than “the norm”. Having lived in rural Japan for three years, I had been used to being one of the only white person in my city of 100,000 people. I had been used to Japanese students coming up to me in the streets to ask to take a picture with me; I had been used to the stares and the quiet whispers of “すごい！外国人だね！” (“Woah, a foreigner!”). Something about Ghana felt different, however. I felt noticed in a more invasive kind of way. I am unsure of how else to phrase it. In Japan, although I was noticed, I felt as though I was a part of the community: I worked in my city, I did yoga at the community centre every week, I had a family doctor, I had a local café I visited with a friend every Wednesday after work.

In Ghana, I felt as though my presence was invasive. It wasn't anything that Ghanaians did – everyone I met was absolutely lovely. People were helpful and nice and caring, and there was nothing that made me feel unwanted. I don't believe that those feelings were coming from Ghanaians. I am certain, in retrospect, that those feelings were coming from myself.

The kindness that I was shown by Ghanaians was unparalleled. I would be welcomed in any store or establishment I stepped into in a way that the Ghanaians around me were not. I was made to feel like a special guest at all times. Living with a Ghanaian family, I quickly learned

that welcoming people into your home – whether it be a house or your country – was the norm. You always made sure to have enough food in your house to feed a visitor, even if you weren't expecting anyone. Similarly, I found, you always made sure to have enough generosity and kindness on your heart to welcome a visitor to your country, even if it put you out a little bit.

I wonder, though. That kind treatment I received, I received as a foreigner. Was it because my foreignness was visibly obvious? Would I have received the same kind, generous treatment had I been black or brown? That is, if my foreignness had been less visibly obvious? While I understood that the kindness I was shown was genuine, that people just loved to share their culture, their homes, and their country, I questioned the role of my whiteness in the giving of that kindness. Was it simply a remnant of colonialism?

On my second trip to Kurotia, I had to take a taxi to one of the neighbourhoods where I was to interview four people. One of those people met me at the tro-tro stop and called a taxi; he would not allow me to pay for it, going so far as giving me back my money after I'd given it to the taxi driver. While I was appreciative for the kindness he demonstrated, I was very aware of the vast difference in financial privilege between us. I learned afterwards, however, that that was an easy way for him to show that I was welcome in his community; he was sharing with me what he could in order to make me feel comfortable. Although logically I understood that this sort of generosity is simply a part of Ghanaian culture, it was still difficult for me to accept this financial generosity from someone who seemed to have so much less in terms of financial means than I do – especially when I felt that I had little to offer the community in return. What he expressed, however, was that he was so happy to have someone to listen to his experiences, who wanted to learn about life in Kurotia, and who cared about what he had to say. Even though I felt that was a paltry thing to offer, to him, that was more than enough.

The next question I asked myself was “what makes this experience in Ghana so different than the one I had in Japan?”. In a reflection I had written prior to leaving for Ghana, I pointed out an extremely important difference between the two countries:

“My experience in Ghana, I expect, will be largely different than my experience in Japan – not only due to the obvious cultural, social, and developmental differences, but also due to very different historical contexts. Japan is a country that has never been colonized and, in fact, was a ruthless colonizer itself; Ghana, on the other hand, has a complex and long relationship with colonialism that I expect will deeply affect my experiences there.”

Due to those significant historical differences, my presence in Japan did not have the same meaning to me as did my presence in Ghana. In Japan, I was of course aware of my difference, but I wasn’t required to be aware of my privilege, largely due to the fact that I was not any more or less privileged than the average Japanese person. Although being white caused some stares and comments in public, my presence in Japan wasn’t informed by colonialism; it was more or less an indication of an increasingly globalized world instead of a result of historical circumstances.

In Ghana, however, my presence *was* informed by a history of colonialism – first by the Portuguese, and then by the British. And, as such, peoples’ reactions to me were also informed by this history of colonialism. I feel extremely lucky in that I had Magnus Mfoafo-M’Carthy to discuss this with prior to leaving for Ghana, and upon my return to Canada. Speaking with him gave me the opportunity to deconstruct some of the things I had been feeling and supplied context that I may not have understood while in Ghana. Due to the history of colonialism, Magnus explained, things that are perceived as “Western” by Ghanaians are often, without question, seen as better. Ideas, products, individuals. Although Ghana has been an independent

nation since 1957, the legacies of colonialism are still present in the overarching attitudes of Ghanaians. This is what I had been experiencing in that special treatment I received.

It was with these questions running through my head that I completed my research in Kurotia, a community that I wish I had had the opportunity to know better. I left Ghana forty-five days before my original departure date. There were a number of reasons for this, including problems at my practicum placement and family issues in Canada, but even now I look back longing to have had more time in Kurotia. I was welcomed into the community with open arms – to invitations for dinner and assurances that if I were to return, I would have many people who would be happy to host me. Spending more time in Kurotia could only have positively influenced my research experience, through the creation of stronger community ties and the increased development of trust, and my own personal experience as well. Although I feel that I created positive connections within the community in the limited time that I had, I regret not having the time or opportunity to spend longer with the lovely people and families that invited me into their homes and allowed me to learn so much.

Developing a study in what is not only an unfamiliar community, but an unfamiliar country as well, was a challenge for me – especially never having completed such a large and important research project before! In retrospect, I feel as though I threw myself into a deeper end of research without having acquainted myself with the shallow end; I have always thrived, however, in challenging situations where I am quickly forced to learn and adapt. It is these kind of unfamiliar situations where, in some ways, I feel most comfortable. Gaining perspective on the world and learning about the people share this planet with me has been a primary motivator in many of the decisions I have made thus far in my adult life; living in Japan, completing my MSW, spending time in Ghana, and choosing to do research independently in Ghana have all

positively informed my view of the world and have enabled me to learn so many things that I would have been unable to had I stayed at home here in Canada.

While completing this research was a challenge, it was a challenge that I embraced wholeheartedly. I had the opportunity to learn more about Ghana and Ghanaians in a way that I would not have had access to by simply completing my practicum placement, I developed special connections and relationships with a small community in Ghana, I was forced to learn more about research methods, and I gained so much perspective about who I am and the privilege that I hold. I feel privileged to have met the people I did; I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to live and work in Ghana, even for such a short period of time; I feel privileged to be able to introduce the stories that these individuals in Kurotia have to tell; and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to make my world slightly bigger and more full than it was before.

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Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

Host Community Narratives of Volunteer Tourism in Ghana

REB # 4573

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gather the experiences and stories that local community members have of volunteer tourism in Ghana. Volunteer tourism is when people from abroad travel to other countries in order to volunteer and have a holiday. There is very little research about the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of people living in a community where volunteer tourists come in. The focus of the research will be to understand how Ghanaian people feel about volunteer tourism.

The researcher intends to interview 8-12 people for this study. You are invited to take part in this study.

PROCEDURE

You are invited to meet with a researcher for a period of about 45 to 90 minutes to answer questions about your experiences, beliefs, and perceptions about volunteer tourism. For the purpose of accurate data collection, the interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. Any information like names or quotations that link you to the research will be deleted. Quotations from the interview may be used in the final report, however you have the option to have direct quotations omitted from the final report. Here are some example questions and themes that the interview will cover:

- Have you met any volunteer tourists? In what capacity?
- What kind of people do you think come to Ghana to volunteer?
- Do you think there is a difference between volunteer tourists and other tourists?

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

The outcome of this research may enhance the professional understanding of the experiences of community members in Ghana and other similar environments. At present, there

are very few studies that provide that perspective in the literature on volunteer tourism. Much of the current research is on the volunteers and their experiences. As such, your participation will add that perspective to the research literature.

There are no significant risks or negative consequences as a result of your participation. There is a possibility that describing your experiences and feelings may generate a feeling of discomfort. In the event that you feel unwell or are exhibiting signs of stress, the interviewer may pause or stop the interview. If you feel uncomfortable or would not like to answer a question, you may do so without penalty.

COMPENSATION

There will be no costs to your participation in the interview. To thank you for your time and effort, a small gift will be given to each participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to maintain your confidentiality during the interview. All information identifying you that is provided during the course of the interview will be deleted during the course of the study. The information you provide in this study is confidential with the following exceptions: 1). If you disclose a plan or desire to harm yourself or someone else; 2) if you disclose a situation in which a child is being abused or neglected. In any of these situations, the researcher may offer to make a referral for an assessment or counseling.

As a participant, you have the right to make a request to review, erase or edit any part of the transcript of the interview. All the tapes will be erased after the interviews have been transcribed. Upon request, a copy of the transcript could be sent to you. Quotations from the interview may be used, however, you will not be identified in any of the quotations. Additionally, you may choose to have your direct quotations omitted from the final report. Participants in the study will be assigned codes or pseudonyms so they cannot be identified.

All information gathered, including contact information, will be stored in a secure, locked cabinet and the researcher will be the only person with access to the information. This information will be destroyed by the principle research after completion of the final paper in spring 2016. All electronic information will be stored in password-protected files on a secure computer and all the information will be destroyed after seven years by the principle researcher.

The interviews will be transcribed by Danielle Lediard, the principle investigator. The audio recordings will be deleted by Ms. Lediard after transcription, no more than three (3) months after the interview.

On the publication of the information, no information identifying you or other participants will be included.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You have the right to agree or disagree to participate in this interview. On agreeing to be a part of this study, you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences and information provided prior to withdrawing will be destroyed. Also, you have the right to either answer or decline to answer any questions.

DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

The research findings of this study will be published in professional journals and presented at conferences and forums in the community. None of the information presented will identify you.

At your request, the researcher will ensure that a summary of the findings will be made available to you.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I, _____ have read the information sheet for the study named **“Host Community Narratives of Volunteer Tourism in Ghana”**. The purpose of this study is to gather the experiences and stories that local community members have of volunteer tourism in Ghana. My role in this study is to help the researchers to gather information by sharing my experiences. I am aware that that the interview will require audio taping. All questions / concerns I have regarding this study have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this consent form, I do not waive any of my rights.

Dr. Bob Basso, Chair, Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University may be contacted by research subjects to discuss their rights. Dr. Basso may be reached by telephone at +1-(519) 884-1970 ext. 4994 or rbasso@wlu.ca

I AGREE TO HAVE MY QUOTATIONS INCLUDED IN THE FINAL REPORT.

Yes _____ No _____

I WANT TO REVIEW MY QUOTATIONS BEFORE THEY ARE INCLUDED IN THE FINAL REPORT.

Yes _____ No _____

IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE FINAL REPORT.

Yes _____ No _____

IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

I agree to participate in this study.

Participant

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher(s)

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Guide
Semi-Structured Interview Guide –
Host Community Narratives of Volunteer Tourism in Ghana

Begin the interview by creating a connection with the interviewee and making the environment more comfortable.

- How are you doing today?
- Thanks/appreciation
- Explaining the research/consent
- Can you tell me a bit about yourself...?

Demographic questions:

- Gender
- Age
- Length of stay in the community
- Marital status
- Education level
- Employment

Thematic questions:

1. Can you tell me a bit about your current view and understanding of volunteer tourism?
 - a. Can you describe it to the best of your knowledge?
 - b. How about the volunteers – what is your perspective or view on people who come here to volunteer?
 - i. Could you share with me why you feel this way? Do you have any examples?
 - ii. Do you think there's a difference between volunteer tourists and other tourists?
 1. If so, can you describe to me what that difference is?
2. How would you describe the organizations that bring volunteers into communities like yours?
 - a. Can you tell me a bit about how do you feel about these organizations?
 - i. Could you share with me why you feel this way?
 - ii. Have you always felt this way?
3. Could you share with me some of the volunteer tourism projects in your current or past community? Do you know of any specific examples?
 - a. Why, where, what, how?
 - b. What kind of work were/are the organizations doing?
 - c. Do you feel that these projects have a positive effect on your community? Negative? Both?
 - i. Could you give some examples?
 - d. Have you personally been positively or negatively affected by these organizations?
 - i. Can you tell me a bit more?
 - ii. Could you give me some examples?

4. Can you tell me a bit about what you like and dislike about the volunteers being in your community?
 - a. Could you share any specific examples? / Could you share a little bit more about why this is?
5. What, if anything, do you think that the organizations could do differently?
 - a. Could you explain a little bit more?
 - b. Why do you think this?
 - c. What do you think the effect on your community would be?
 - d. How about the volunteers? Do you think there's anything they could do differently?
 - i. Could you explain a little bit more?
 - ii. Why's that?
6. Why do you think volunteers choose to come to Ghana over other countries?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with volunteer tourism or about how you feel about the topic?

Thank you so much for your participation. As a token of appreciation, here's a small gift for you. If you have any questions, concerns, or you've changed your mind about participating, please don't hesitate to contact me. My contact information is available in the consent form.